AFTER THE BATTLE

BREAK-OUT ACROSS THE SEINE

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Front cover: Having passed Fontainebleau, the leaders of the 5th Infantry Division head for the Seine river on August 23, 1944. By the side of the D210, the wall of the Château de Bellefontaine has seen little change since the war. The Seine is still one kilometre away. (USNA)

Centre pages: At Les Andelys, the 6th Troops Engineers built this Class 40 Bailey pontoon bridge on August 29-31. It was erected just below Château-Gaillard, a mighty castle built by King Richard Coeur de Lion to bar French advances down the Seine. The army of Philippe Auguste, the King of France, took Château-Gaillard in 1204 after an eight-month siege.

Back cover: Dedication of the memorial to the crews of two Beaufighters shot down on April 22, 1945 at Moldoen Island in Norway — see page 45. (R. Skram)

Acknowledgements: The Editor and Jean Paul Pallud would like to thank Philippe Bonnet-Laborderie, the director of the GEMOB (Chemin de Plouy, La Mie au Roy, 60000, Beauvais) for making available the superb pictures taken in 1944 by Fernand Watteeuw, and also Daniel Rose and Philippe Wirton for their help with the Seine crossing story.
Photo Credits: IWM — Imperial War Museum; NAC — National Archives of Canada; USNA — US National Archives.

By D-Day, Allied air attacks had cut or made unusable all the 24 bridges over the Seine between Paris and the sea. At the end of August, the Germans themselves destroyed the ones remaining upstream, when the Allied spearheads threatened to capture them. This bridge at Corbeil, 30 kilometres south of Paris, was blown by them on August 24. (USNA)

Following its break-out from the Cherbourg peninsula in the last days of July 1944, Lieutenant General George S. Patton's US Third Army was advancing in spectacular fashion, both eastwards and westwards into the Brittany peninsula. On August 15 (except for its VIII Corps deployed in Brittany), Patton's forces were arrayed in four corps of two divisions each. While half of the XV Corps — two divisions — still faced north at Argentan, the corps staff and two other divisions, the 5th Armored and 79th Infantry Divisions, were moving eastward with all speed. Also heading east were the XX Corps, with the 7th Armored and 5th Infantry Divisions, and the XII Corps with the 4th Armored and 35th Infantry Divisions. While the latter corps had orders to take Orléans, the other two were directed to establish bridgeheads over the Eure river, the XV Corps at Dreux and the XX Corps at Chartres.

However, the momentum of the advance was outstripping the capacity to keep the units at the front adequately supplied, and lack of fuel was threatening to bring operations to a halt. Also, Lieutenant General Omar N. Bradley, the US 12th Army Group commander, was still worried that the left flank of Third Army was not yet properly covered by the First Army, so on August 15 he limited Patton's force to Dreux, Chartres, and Orléans. By the following evening, Dreux had been taken and the Eure river had been crossed for most of its length south to Chartres, though the city itself had not yet been taken. To the south, on the Loire, the XII Corps had captured Orléans dashing all hopes the German 1. Armee had had of organising a defence of the Paris-Orleans gap. Having reached its objective, in compliance with orders, the Third Army then halted its advance.

Laurent Charbonneau took this comparison for us of the rebuilt bridge, now named 'Pont de l'Armée Patton', Patton's Army Bridge. In the left background, on the far bank, is the Jacques Bourgouin School and in the centre, the top of the tower of the Saint-Spire Church.

BREAK-OUT ACROSS THE SEINE

By Jean Paul Pallud

On August 17, after meeting with Patton and Lieutenant General Courtney H. Hodges, the US First Army commander, Bradley lifted his restriction. With the main German forces concentrated west of the lower Seine, by advancing to the river Allied forces would extend the lower jaw of the Allied pincers, which already stretched from Argentan to Dreux. Patton instructed his XX Corps to complete the capture of Chartres and to take in the Dreux sector, and he directed the XV Corps to head north-east from Dreux to the Seine at Mantes, 50 kilometres north-west of Paris. To save fuel, he held back the XII Corps at Orléans. The 5th Armored and 79th Infantry Divisions moved swiftly to Mantes on August 18 and started to bring down artillery on the river-crossing sites there. The following day a task force of the 79th Division entered Mantes only to discover that the Germans had gone.

On August 19, Eisenhower discussed plans for the pursuit of the fleeing enemy with his army commanders and they agreed to modify further the original 'Overlord' plan: instead of halting at the Seine to reorganise and build up a supply base west of the river, they decided to move immediately into operations directed toward Germany itself.

As US Army historian Martin Blumenson noted in *Breakout and Pursuit*, the volume of the US Army's official history dealing with the battle of France: 'To drive across the upper Seine south of Paris and the lower Seine north of Paris would be a comparatively simple manoeuvre, but the presence of a considerable number of Germans between the Argentan-Falaise pocket and the lower Seine presented an opportunity to complete the destruction of the forces that had escaped the pocket [at Falaise]. The Allies estimated that 75,000 enemy troops and 250 tanks could still be encircled west of the Seine. If American troops drove down the west bank of the Seine from Mantes, they might cut German escape routes, push the Germans toward the mouth of the Seine, where the river is wider and more difficult to cross, and fashion another encirclement inside Normandy.

'The major difficulty of a manoeuvre such as this was the same that had inhibited American activity north of Argentan. At Mantes, the XV Corps was again beyond the zone assigned to the 12th Army Group. Further advance toward the mouth of the Seine would place the corps across the projected routes of advance of the British and Canadian armies and would surely result in an administrative headache.

'Although General Bradley offered to lend trucks to transport British troops to Mantes and suggested that the British move units through the American zone to launch the attack down the west bank of the river, Lieutenant-General Miles Dempsey, the commander of British Second Army, declined with thanks on the basis that his logistical organisation could not support such a move. For the Allies then to take advantage of the alluring possibilities at the Seine — disrupting the German withdrawal, bagging additional prisoners among the escapees from the Argentan-Falaise pocket, removing Germans from the British zone, and thus allowing Dempsey to move to the Seine against almost negligible resistance — General Montgomery would have to permit further intrusion of American troops into the British sector and accept in advance the administrative consequences. He, Bradley, and Dempsey decided to chance the headache.'

On August 20, General Bernard L. Montgomery, who still held operational control of the two Allied army groups in Normandy, confirmed in writing the decisions taken on the previous day. Directive M-519 detailed his intention 'to complete the destruction of the enemy forces in north-west France' and fixed the boundary between his 21st Army Group and 12th Army Group up to the Seine as Argentan—Dreux—Mantes and beyond that through Amiens, Ghent and Antwerp. Once the Germans in the Argentan-Falaise pocket had been dealt with, the 21st Army Group would advance to the Seine with all speed, whereupon the British Second Army was to cross between Mantes and Louviers and the Canadian First Army in the neighbourhood of Rouen. Meanwhile, the 12th Army Group was to move south of Paris and advance to the sector Troyes—Reims—Amiens. However, the French capital was not to be taken until the Supreme Commander decided to do so.

Top: **The British 11th Armoured Division met stiff opposition on the Touques river near Gacé on August 21. Two days later in liberated Gacé, AFPU Sergeant Norman Midgley took this picture of people giving a great welcome to the British troops. (IWM)** *Above:* **Philippe Wirton took this comparison in Rue de Falaise.**

Left: **The lead units of the US XV Corps reached the Seine near Mantes on August 18 and a task force of the 79th Infantry Division secured the town the following day. Here, a somewhat relaxed patrol stands at the western end of the destroyed road bridge at Mantes. (USNA)** *Right:* **Its present-day replacement is just a nondescript concrete construction.**

FIRST CROSSING AT MANTES

Having decided to send part of the Third Army to drive down the west bank of the Seine to cut German escape routes, at the same time the Allied command had the opportunity of seizing a bridgehead on the east bank of the river. Third Army thus gave a double mission to the XV Corps: while the 5th Armored Division was to attack down the west bank of the Seine, the 79th Division was to establish a bridgehead on the far bank as a first step for future operations.

At 9.35 p.m. on the 19th, Major General Wade H. Haislip, the XV Corps commander, called Major General Ira T. Wyche, the commander of the 79th Division, to order him to cross the Seine that very night. The 79th was to get troops on the east bank, build a treadway bridge, and gain ground in sufficient depth to protect the crossing sites from medium artillery fire. Wyche acted at once and he had the men of the 313th Infantry Regiment woken out of their sleeping bags. In the first hours of August 20, under torrential rain, they began crossing in single file, along the narrow footbridge over the dam near Méricourt, each man holding on to the one ahead to keep from falling into the water.

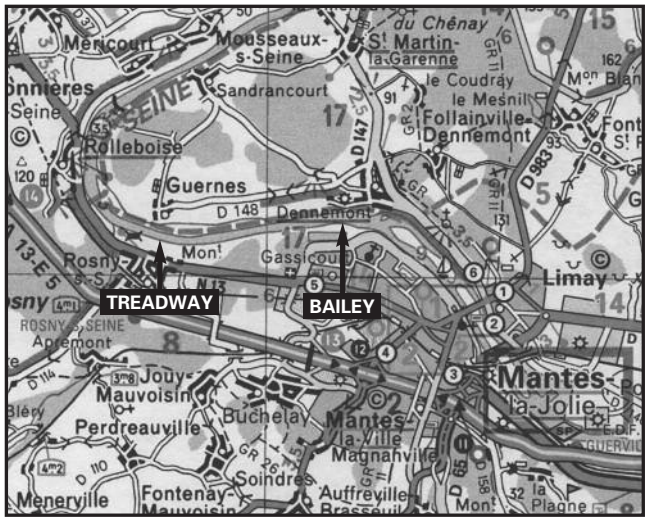
At daybreak, the 314th Infantry paddled across the river and joined up with the 313th, and the divisional engineers began to assemble a treadway bridge between Rosny on the southern bank and Guernes on the far side, some distance upstream from the Méricourt dam. This was completed in the afternoon and the 315th Infantry then crossed in trucks. By nightfall on August 20, most of the division, including tanks and artillery, was across the Seine and a solid bridgehead had been established on the far bank. The following day, while engineers started to construct a Bailey bridge at Mantes (it was opened to traffic on August 23), anti-aircraft units of the 23rd Anti-Aircraft Artillery Group progressively arrived and deployed to protect the crossings. Some 20 Focke-Wulf 190s attacked the bridge sites on the morning of the 21st, bombing and strafing. The Americans claimed to have shot down a dozen of them.

On the German side, controlling this sector of the Seine, the I. SS-Panzerkorps reacted quickly and ordered the 18. Feld-Division (L), with remaining elements of the attached 17. Feld-Division (L), to counter-attack the American bridgehead. The first assault was launched in the evening of August 22 by the Jäger-Regiment 36 (L) and it struck the 314th Infantry in front of Fontenay-Saint-Père, in the centre and the right flank of the bridgehead. Some elements of the 6. Fallschirmjäger-Division joined in and the attack was renewed next morning in concert with four Tiger II tanks from SS-Panzer-Abteilung 101. The Americans were thrown back to Limay, the Germans retaking Porcheville on the Seine bank, but their

The 313th Infantry crossed the Seine along the footbridge over a dam in the early hours of August 20 and the 314th Infantry paddled across later in the morning. Here, troops of the latter regiment board boats for the crossing. (USNA)

A light raft had soon been built using three boats, the middle one of which carried the outboard petrol engine, and jeeps were ferried across the river. (USNA)

A Class 70 Bailey bridge built over river barges downstream of Mantes was opened to traffic on August 23. This picture was taken some days later when a second parallel bridge had been added, built on the same barges. (USNA)



It was easy to find this spot on the Quai des Cordeliers, on the left bank of the Seine. Painters were at work on a house beside the quay and Jean Paul was able to take this comparison using their scaffolding.

infantry lost heavily to the strong American artillery. For the week to come, the American guns were to hammer every German attack with heavy interdiction fire.

Another counter-attack was launched on the 24th, this time on the left flank of the bridgehead. The 313th Infantry had to fall back for a time but a very strong artillery response crushed the attackers and the ground lost was soon retaken. Another attack came on the afternoon of the 26th, this time supported by 14 Tiger IIs. The Germans advanced on Fontenay-Saint-Père, forcing the 314th Infantry from some parts of the village. US artillery battered the attackers who again suffered heavy losses and fighter-bombers were also called in. Next morning, the Americans recovered the lost ground. The Tigers again attacked on the 28th in front of Sailly when the Americans moved out from the sector of Fontenay-Saint-Père which they had finally cleared; two of the tanks were disabled, one by the concerted fire from several Shermans, the other by artillery.

Though they were repulsed, the German counter-attacks were impressive enough to worry the Americans and make them somewhat nervous. Overstressed GIs aimed their rifles menacingly at any local French people who consequently became afraid of their liberators.

The American bridgehead across the Seine at Mantes was a major threat to the Germans as armour could easily break out from there and race northwards to the rear of those units trying to recover behind the Seine, so from August 21 the German command sent the Luftwaffe in force against it — its strongest effort for a long time. Flying from airfields north and east of Paris, Messerschmitt Me 109s and Focke-Wulf 190s, some armed with Wfr.Gr. 21 rockets, attacked daily in groups of 20, 30 and even 50 aircraft, bombing and strafing the bridging sites and artillery positions.

Over 200 guns of the 23rd Anti-Aircraft Artillery Group — comprising the 411th, the 456th and the 463rd AAA Battalions and several other groups — were deployed to protect the bridgehead. It was an incredible sight: aircraft attacking at zero feet; bombs exploding in the river and throwing geysers of water high in the sky; aircraft being literally chopped to pieces by the anti-aircraft guns, while others escaped trailing smoke. The American gunners claimed 50 German aircraft shot down in four days, a total which appears exaggerated, 30 being more probable. In the meantime, German and American fighters had fought for air supremacy overhead, the losses to each side being some 20 aircraft.

The US 7th Armored Division met determined resistance in Chartres on the evening of August 15 and Combat Command B had to withdraw from the city. Tanks were at a disadvantage in the streets and Major General Walton H. Walker, the US XX Corps commander, ordered the 5th Division to aid the armour. The 11th Infantry attacked on the 18th and the combined effort of tanks and foot soldiers succeeded in clearing Chartres. This picture of Major General Lindsay McD. Silvester (left), the 7th Armored commander, and General Walker (right) holding a roadside conference was taken the following day. (USNA)

The original Signal Corps caption of this picture stated only that it had been taken 'near Chartres', and it took Jean Paul some time before he finally traced the location of the bridge, which he did in 1993. It spans the Eure river at Thivars, ten kilometres south of Chartres, and the road is the N10, the highway south to Châteaudun.

From August 20, the US XIX Corps rushed headlong northwards aiming for Elbeuf and Louviers. At Conches-en-Ouches, 18 kilometres west of Evreux, these tanks of the 67th Armored Regiment, 2nd Armored Division, were pictured firing shells to soften up German positions on August 22. By August 24, the lead units were on the southern outskirts of Elbeuf. (USNA)

ATTEMPT OF ENCIRCLEMENT ON THE LOWER SEINE, AUGUST 20-26

Following the decision of August 19 to encircle the German forces in the area between Argentan and the lower Seine, Bradley and Montgomery conferred with Hodges of First Army. He was instructed to assist by sending the XIX Corps to attack northwards along the west bank of the Eure. Actually, the XIX Corps and XV Corps were both to attack northwards, abreast and straddling the river: the XIX Corps on the left heading to Elbeuf with two divisions — the 2nd Armored and the 30th Infantry Divisions — and the XV Corps on the right heading for Louviers with the 5th Armored.

Blumenson: 'The first objective of the attack between the Eure and the Seine was to cut the German escape routes leading to the Seine river crossings between Vernon and Pont de l'Arche. Though Montgomery's order issued on August 20 directed an advance to Louviers, and Elbeuf, and beyond, Patton on the previous evening had instructed Haislip to drive on Louviers and Elbeuf, the latter 40 miles from Mantes, until relieved by elements of the XIX Corps; the 5th Armored Division was then to return to Mantes. A day later Patton limited Haislip and told him to deny the Germans the use of crossing sites as far north as Louviers until relieved by XIX Corps on his left. Haislip designated Louviers, 30 miles from Mantes, as the final objective, and Major General Lunsford E. Oliver, the division commander, indicated intermediate objectives at Vernon and at the loop of the Seine near Les Andelys, ten and 20 miles from Mantes, respectively.'

The XIX Corps launched the attack in the Mortagne-Brézolles area on August 20 with two divisions abreast, the 2nd Armored on the left to advance on the Verneuil-Elbeuf axis and the 30th Division on the right to attack through Nonancourt and Evreux to Autheuil on the Eure. The 28th Division was echeloned to the left rear to protect the corps west flank.

Blumenson: 'Major General Edward H. Brooks's 2nd Armored Division forced crossings over the Avre river, bypassed Verneuil, leaving its reduction to the 28th Division, and continued toward Breteuil. Despite rain, mud, and poor visibility, the armour continued to advance rapidly, bypassing Breteuil, leaving it also to the 28th, and rushed headlong through Conches and Le Neubourg toward the Seine. Opposition from the 17. Feld-Division (L) and the 344.

On the XIX Corps' right wing, the 30th Infantry Division moved through Nonancourt and entered Evreux on August 23. Locals lined the curb as GIs of the 117th Infantry moved through the city. (USNA)

Nobody was there to greet us when we took our comparison but the Rue de Verdun has been left untouched by the progress of time.

The US XV Corps also turned northwards on the 20th, heading for Louviers along the east bank of the Eure river with the 5th Armored Division in the van. This picture of one of its Shermans was taken at Dreux a few days later. The tank is advancing cautiously after having broken a road-block in the town. (USNA)

and 331. Infanterie-Divisions just melted away. Small pockets of infantrymen were easily swept into prisoner of war cages, and jammed columns of motorised and horse-drawn vehicles were smashed, burned, or captured.'

By August 24, the leading elements of the 2nd Armored were at the southern outskirts of Elbeuf where they came up against an armoured Kampfgruppe which had the job of protecting the Seine crossing points downstream. Meanwhile, on the right, the 30th Division had occupied Evreux, bypassed by the 2nd Armored on the 23rd. The division remained in its positions on the following day, two regiments moving north on the 25th to cut the roads into Louviers from the west but patrols found the city abandoned by the Germans.

On August 25, Combat Command A (CCA), reinforced by a combat team of the 28th Division, launched a co-ordinated attack against Elbeuf, the Germans withdrawing across the Seine that night. The city was finally secured the following day.

On the 26th, Louviers and Elbeuf were turned over to the Canadians arriving from the west and the XIX Corps forces started moving in a southerly direction beyond the new army group boundary. Remembering a previous polemic when the British had claimed that they, and not the Americans, had captured Vire, General Brooks ordered the commander of CCA, Colonel John H. Collier, to get a receipt for the city before turning it to the Canadians! At 7.45 p.m. — rather reluctantly as noted by the Americans — Major J. Stevens of the Canadian 7th Infantry Brigade gave such a document to the US 2nd Armored Division.

The XV Corps also launched its attack on August 20 but almost immediately after leaving its positions north-west of Mantes, the 5th Armored Division ran into strong opposition from hastily assembled battle groups which had the task of covering the crossings downstream.

Blumenson: 'The Germans fought skilfully, using to good advantage terrain features favourable for defence, numerous ravines and woods in particular. Fog and rain that continued for several days provided additional cover for German ambush parties using Panzerfausts and anti-tank grenades against American tanks.'

As these elements held fast until they withdrew across the Seine on the night of the 25th, it took the 5th Armored five days of hard fighting to advance 30 kilometres and accomplish its mission.

On August 24, Hodges informed Haislip that starting on the following morning elements of the British XXX Corps were to

Left: **Nine German artillery pieces and six armoured vehicles had been destroyed in the Dreux operation and over 200 prisoners were captured. FFI fighters took a burden off the American soldiers by rounding up German troops trapped in a corner of the town.** *Right:* **Time has left this part of Dreux completely unchanged. The street on the left is Rue Godeau.**

Left: **L'Aigle, August 23. With the help of locals, engineers completed a section of a Class 40 Bailey to repair a bridge blown by the Germans. (IWM)** *Above:* **The Risle river divides into two branches as it passes through L'Aigle, which explains the narrowness of the stream at this spot. This is the eastern branch, and the street is now Rue du Général de Gaulle. (P. Wirton)**

cross the American sector north of the Pacy-sur-Eure—Mantes highway and close on the Seine. Consequently, Haislip had to move his 5th Armored Division south of this now-British sector by 8 a.m. the following morning, leaving only reconnaissance troops along the Seine until relief by the British. From the 24th, units of XV Corps started to hand over the west bank of the river to the British and Canadians before they withdrew southward beyond their own army group boundary with the 21st Army Group now drawn between Dreux and Mantes. For three days, British and Americans columns, the former heading eastward, the latter southward, crossed each other's path, used cross-roads alternately, and completed the operation easily, without the confusion earlier envisioned by higher command.

The envelopment of the German forces on the lower Seine had failed to achieve the success which had been hoped for, causing friction between British and Americans at the beginning of September. Dempsey was reported as complaining that he had been delayed two days when required to hold back while the Americans had to withdraw across his front, but Bradley answered sharply that the drive of his forces northward had been approved by Montgomery. Bradley also pointed out that the First Army push to Elbeuf had speeded up the British advance to the Seine by clearing the area of all German resistance. Informed of the complaint, Montgomery sent Bradley his profound apologies for the misunderstanding.

German opposition west of the Seine ended on August 29 when the last of the escapees crossed the river. In spite of the awful situation in which they found themselves, the Germans managed to get a surprisingly large number of men and their equipment across the Seine. The survey conducted by the RAF Bombing Analysis Unit concluded that over 95 per cent of the personnel who had reached the river had succeeded in crossing; of motor vehicles (other than tanks) reaching the Seine the figure was about 90 per cent and the corresponding figure for armour was about 75 per cent. Put differently, some 240,000 men had got across, as well as over 30,000 vehicles of all types of which about 150 were armour. Later, German officers explained that this success was due to the fact that the British and Canadian armies had not pushed ahead as hard as they might have. Also, the Allied air forces had not been very active over the Seine during these critical days so that the ferries had been able to operate even during daylight hours.

This picture taken at Pacy-sur-Eure on August 27 is symbolic of the collision between British and American units, the former advancing eastward, the latter northward, then back south as they withdrew. Here, an American MP, Corporal Gordon C. Powell, meets up with a British despatch rider, Baltins Dogoughs. (USNA)

Pacy-sur-Eure lies 18 kilometres east of Evreux. Though the crossroads itself has been modernised with a roundabout, the houses have been left untouched.

The 5th Division of the US XX Corps met resistance at Fontainebleau on the 22nd but the German defenders withdrew across the Seine and the Americans reached the river opposite Samoreau the following afternoon. This picture was taken about one kilometre from the Seine as an M10 tank destroyer passes a burning German vehicle. The GI in the foreground is advancing in the wrong direction, away from the river! Our front cover shows another shot of this same scene. (USNA)

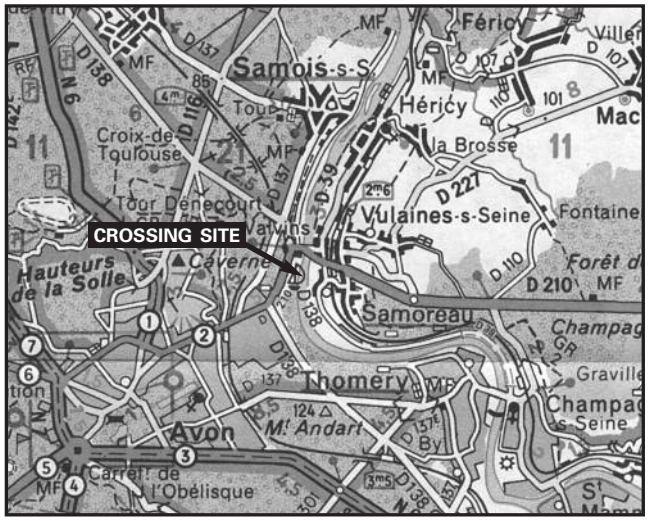
US XX CORPS, SAMOREAU AND MONTEREAU

On August 21, enough supplies having been brought forward (21 C-47s had landed at Le Mans on August 19, bringing about 50 tons of supplies in the first of what was to become a daily airlift to the front), XX and XII Corps advanced eastward, line abreast. The former set out from Dreux and Chartres, the latter from Orléans and Châteaudun, aiming for the upper reaches of the Seine south of Paris. On the German side, the 1. Armee was trying to assemble from its hopelessly weak and disorganised forces enough men to defend the river. Besides small and poorly-equipped elements of the 48. and 338. Infanterie-Divisions, the force included security troops, local town garrisons, anti-aircraft detachments and stragglers.

On the XX Corps' right flank, the 5th Infantry Division had started out with two

The road bridge at Valvins near Samoreau was still standing for the demolition charges had failed to go off when the Germans had tried to blow them, allegedly because the wiring had been sabotaged by the French resistance. The Germans then established machine-gun posts on the bridge, which were a nuisance for the American engineers trying to build a pontoon bridge a few hundred metres upstream. Air support was called in and on August 23, about 5 p.m., an American fighter-bomber dropped two bombs on the bridge, eliminating the machine guns and destroying the span. (USNA)

German artillery opened up on the morning of the 24th and it was decided that they must have observers in the tower of the Vulaines church. It was quickly brought down by tank fire in the afternoon. This M10 tank destroyer firing from the western end of the demolished bridge appears to be taking part in that action. (USNA)



Repaired in 1945 with sections of Bailey bridge, the old bridge at Valvins remained in service until 1977 when a new concrete bridge was built a little distance upstream.

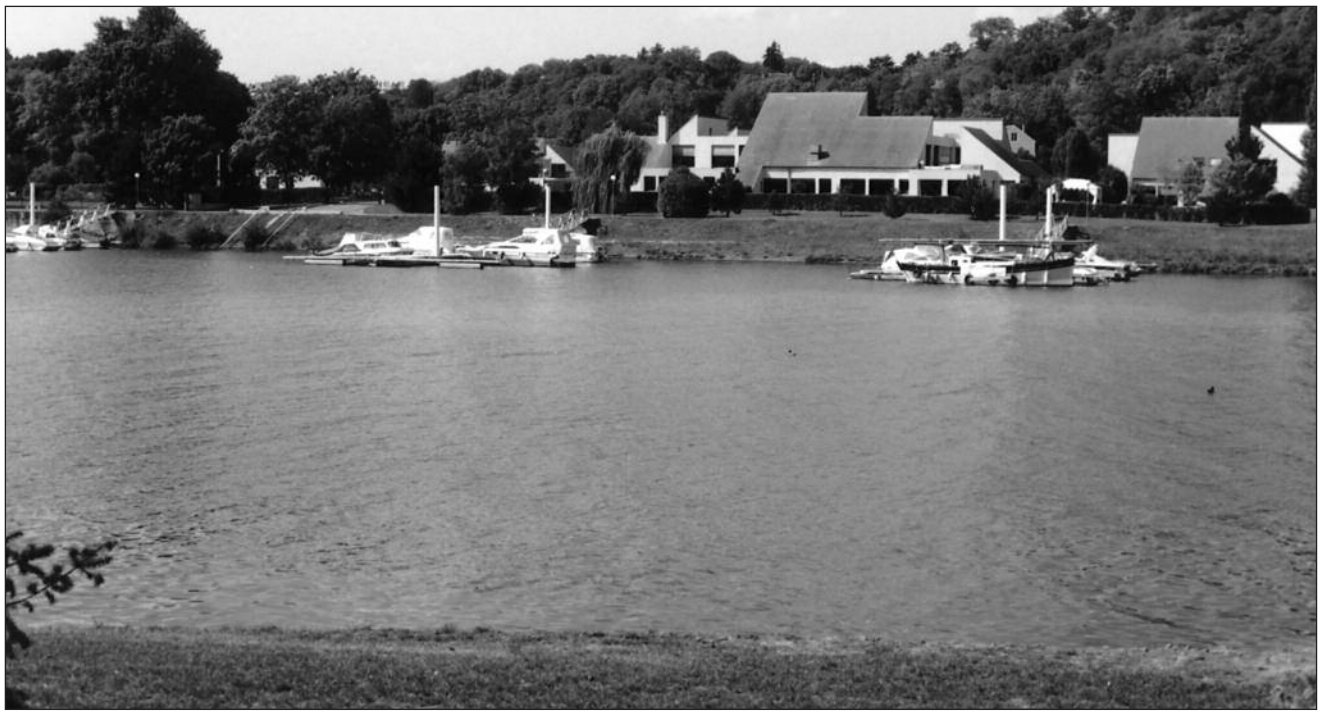
Left: **Infantry paddled across and dug in on the northern bank to protect the building of the pontoon bridge. The GIs quietly walking in the background of this shot ruined the 'digging in under fire' scene that the photographer had tried to capture. (USNA)**

Right: **A gap between the trees and bushes which now line the river bank enabled Jean Paul to take this nice comparison with the new bridge just upstream from where the old one had been.**

The pontoon bridge was opened to traffic in the evening of the 24th and this picture was taken when the first tank rolled over. There are no wheel marks on the eastern bank in the foreground so it really was the first vehicle across. (USNA)

regiments on August 21. The 10th Infantry on the right overcame unexpectedly strong resistance and crossed the Essonne river but on the left the 2nd Infantry became tangled up in a battle for Etampes. Major General S. LeRoy Irwin, the 5th Division commander, thereupon decided to commit his reserve, the 11th Infantry, which skirted the town to the south and crossed the Essonne. However, the leading troops met increasing resistance as they advanced towards Fontainebleau and their progress on the 22nd was less than ten kilometres. Resistance faded on the following morning for the Germans facing the regiment were withdrawing and the 11th Infantry reached the Seine that afternoon. After a brief battle with elements of the 48. Infanterie-Division, troops began to cross the river in small boats found lying along the bank. By August 24, a whole battalion had paddled across at Samoreau, opposite Fontainebleau; engineers had constructed a treadway bridge, and the entire regiment was soon east of the Seine.

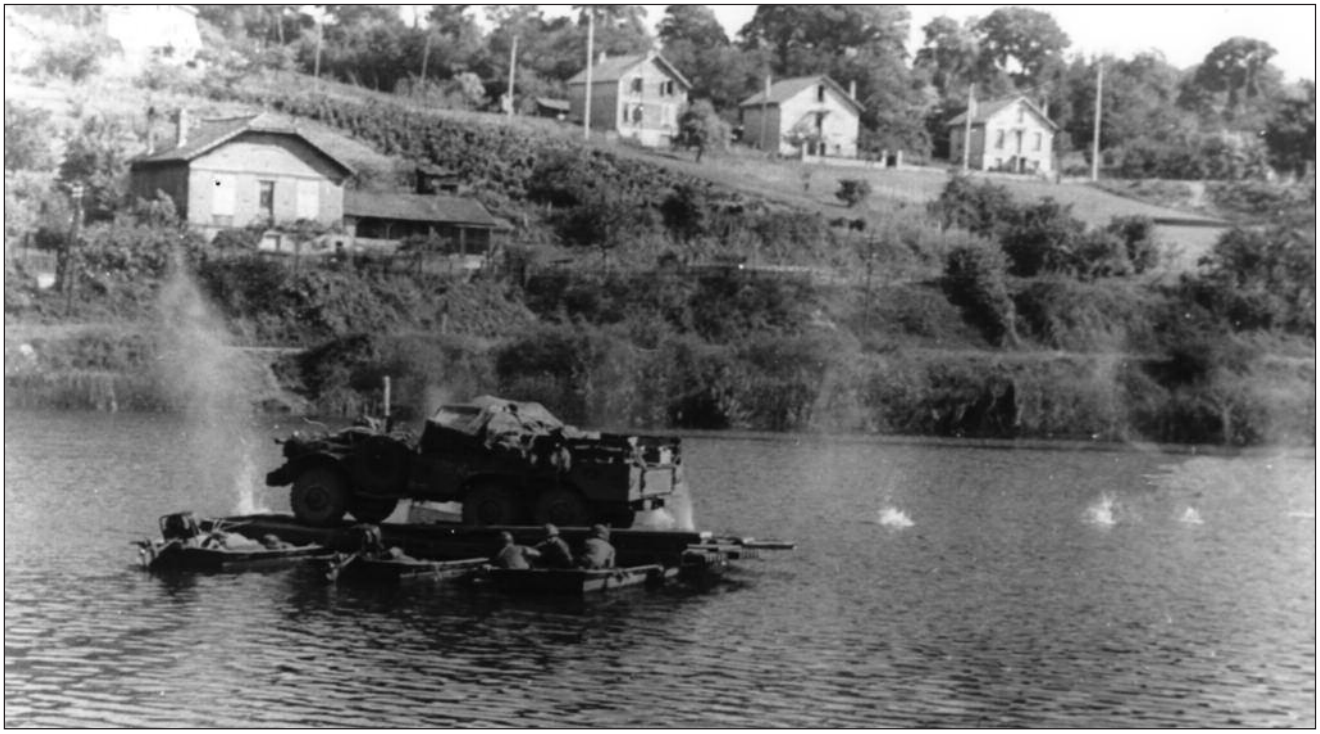
In the meantime, the 10th Infantry had crossed the Loing river at Nemours, which had already been liberated by resistance fighters of the FFI (French Interior Forces), and cleared Montereau, at the confluence of the Seine and Yonne. That evening, engineers brought up assault boats and a solid bridgehead was soon established on the right bank of the Seine. The 48. Infanterie-Division launched a weak counter-attack on the morning of the 25th but by then the whole of the 10th Infantry was across.



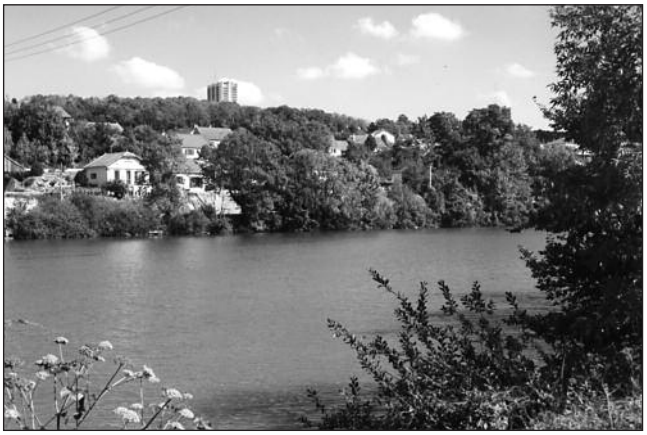
Samoreau, looking westwards over the stretch of the Seine where the American treadway bridge had been. To reach this spot one must walk up from the Rue du Bac at Samoreau. Incidentally, it was at Valvins that the Voie de la Liberté (the trail of kilometre stones tracing the advance of Patton's Third Army across France from Avranches to Metz) crossed the Seine.

On the 5th Division's right wing, the 10th Infantry established a bridgehead at Montereau late on August 24. Next morning, a Sherman tank brought supporting fire to try to silence German machine guns on the far bank. (USNA)

The buildings which stood in August 1944 are still there on the far bank although today new houses and trees hide most of them. This spot on the Chemin de Halage is now a barge repair yard.



Rafts ferried vehicles across in the morning fog but German machine-gun fire from the far bank still raked the river. Private Harold A. Garman of the 5th Medical Battalion was later awarded the Medal of Honor for having under fire rescued from drowning wounded men who were being evacuated across the Seine at Montereau. (USNA)



Another nice comparison taken on the Chemin de Halage at Montereau, not far from the barge repair yard that appears at the top of this page.

US XX CORPS, MELUN

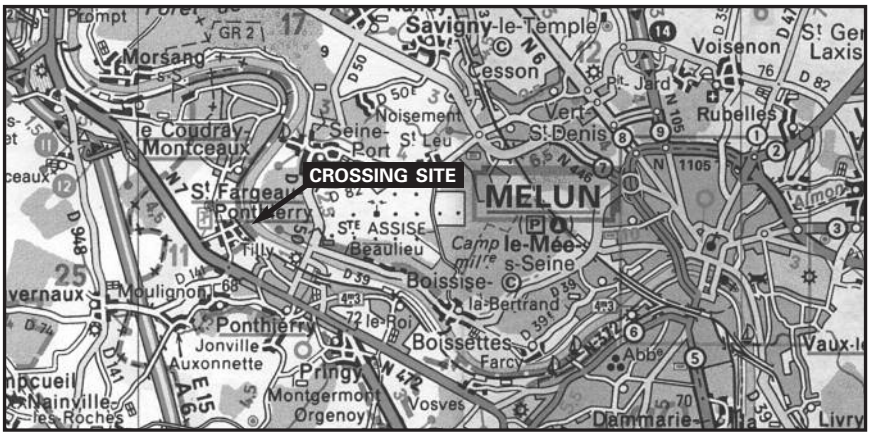
On the XX Corps' left flank, the 7th Armored Division, with two combat commands abreast, covered 50 kilometres on August 21. Combat Command Reserve (CCR) on the right advanced on Melun with plans to seize the bridge and secure a crossing there while CCA aimed to cross the Seine north of the town to attack it from the rear. The following morning, CCR reached the outskirts of Melun and reported that the bridge was still standing and in good condition. Hearing the news, Major General Lindsay McD. Silvester, the division commander, decided to take the Germans by surprise so he ordered CCR to attack at once. However, elements of the 48. Infanterie-Division strongly resisted and the American attack failed, as well as another assault launched in the evening which was preceeded by an air attack and a 20-minute preliminary gun barrage by three battalions of artillery.

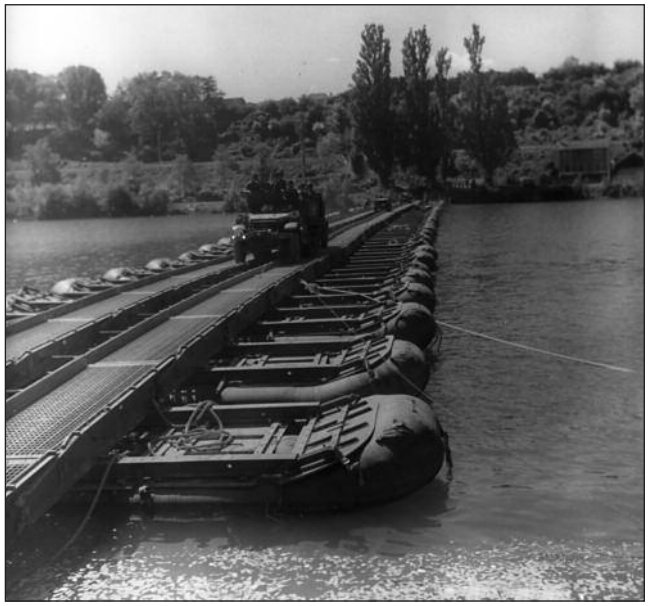
Early on August 23, having completed their withdrawal, the Germans blew the bridge before CCR could launch another attack. Major General Walton H. Walker, the XX Corps commander, arrived at the CCR command post near Melun later that morning. Dissatisfied with what he considered as hesitation on the part of CCR, he ordered an immediate resumption of the attack and practically took command of the operation. In the afternoon, infantrymen used what remained of the structure of the destroyed bridge to reach the island in the middle of the river but they suffered many casualties from fire from the eastern bank and their action soon appeared stalemated.

Meanwhile, having been held up for some time near Arpajon, CCA had reached the Seine at Ponthierry, a dozen kilometres downstream from Melun. The bridge there had also been destroyed but infantry crossed the river in assault boats near Tilly and divisional engineers worked through the night to build a treadway bridge. This was completed by the following morning to allow CCA armour to reinforce the small bridgehead. They were immediately followed by CCB. While CCA established positions facing north and east, CCB turned south and drove into Melun, putting an end to the fight for the town on the morning of the 25th.

That same day, Third Army handed over the Melun bridgehead to the First Army and the VII Corps took over from XX Corps.

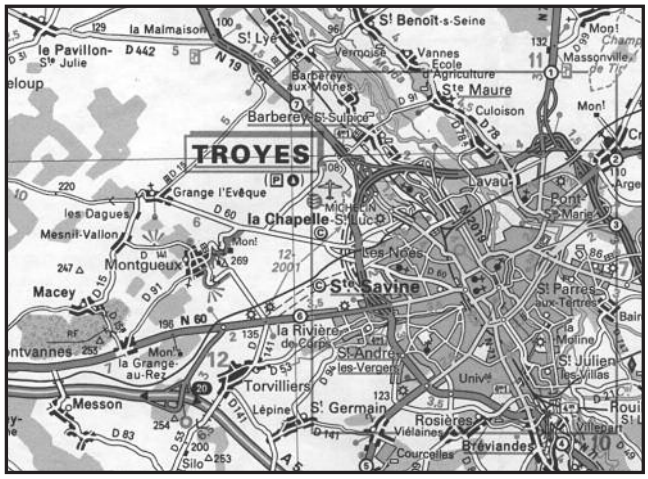
The 7th Armored Division, on the US XX Corps' left flank, rushed eastwards on August 21 with two combat commands abreast, CCR on the right and CCA on the left, aiming for a crossing of the Seine at Melun. This picture of the division commander, Major General Lindsay McD. Silvester, receiving the cheers of the locals was taken some days earlier in front of what was then the town hall of Chartres. (USNA)





Left: **Elements of the 7th Armored Division crossing a treadway bridge built at Tilly, a dozen kilometres downstream of Melun, on the morning of the 24th. The picture was taken from the eastern bank. (USNA)** *Right:* **The bridge site has remained the same, but a comparison is meaningless for bushes now hide most of the bank. To commemorate the crossing of 1944, a statue of General Patton now stands where the western end of the treadway bridge came ashore.**

Leading the advance of the US XII Corps, the 4th Armored Division dashed eastwards on August 21 with CCA in the van. While the armour bypassed Montargis to the north, infantry cleared a road-block at the western entrance of the city. There, the Germans had abandoned an ex-French Somua S-35 tank in the middle of the bridge over the Solin river. (USNA)



This stretch of the N60 near Villemandeur, just west of Montargis, remains largely unchanged. A petrol station now stands in the field where the Somua had been towed by the Americans in 1944.

US XII CORPS, TROYES

For five days, XII Corps had been held at Orléans to conserve fuel and other supplies; now Major General Manton S. Eddy, former commander of the 9th Infantry Division, took over the corps from Major General Gilbert R. Cook who had been in poor health for some time.

On August 20, XII Corps was ordered to resume its advance and drive to the Yonne river at Sens. With CCA in the lead, the 4th Armored Division rushed eastwards on August 21, bypassing Montargis which was found to be defended with its bridges over the Loing river destroyed. Instead reconnaissance troops found a damaged but usable bridge at Souppes-sur-Loing, some 25 kilometres north of Montargis, so CCA crossed the river there and raced to Sens against only light and occasional opposition. The leading elements entered the city that afternoon, surprising the German garrison to such an extent that some officers were caught strolling in the streets in dress uniform. Next morning, a firm bridgehead had been established across the Yonne.

Sizeable German forces — remnants of the 708. Infanterie-Division with some security troops and supply personnel — still were encamped in Montargis and while the US 35th Infantry Division advanced on the western side of the city, CCB turned south from Souppes-sur-Loing and outflanked the town from the east. A coordinated attack broke the last resistance and Montargis was finally liberated on the 24th. Thereafter, armour and infantry proceeded to sweep the area eastward to Sens.

From Sens, CCA resumed its drive eastwards on the morning of August 25 and reached Troyes. The combat command launched a frontal attack in 'desert spread' formation, charging across five kilometres of open ground sloping down towards the city with its tanks 100 yards apart firing their weapons continuously. Colonel Bruce C. Clarke, the CCA commander, and Major Arthur L. West who had led the armoured charge were awarded the Distinguished Service Cross. Nevertheless, strong German resistance was encountered in the city and street fighting continued through the night. Meanwhile, a task force had successfully crossed the Seine north of the town that evening to attack the rear of the German garrison the following morning. This effectively put an end to resistance in Troyes, resulting in the capture of some 500 prisoners.

Once across the river the task force turned back into Troyes, attacking the German garrison from the rear. Immediately after liberation, the locals erased all traces of the detested occupiers. (USNA)

Left: **In the sector of the British XXX Corps, the 43rd (Wessex) Division was detailed to cross the Seine at Vernon. The plan was for an assault by two battalions of the 129th Brigade, then a third was to follow crossing over the demolished road bridge as soon as the German machine-gun posts that covered it had been taken out. H-Hour was fixed for 7 p.m. Here the assault group assembles in Vernon on the afternoon of August 25. (IWM)** *Right:* **The streets of Vernon still provide good cover.**

BRITISH XXX CORPS, VERNON

In the north, the 21st Army Group had planned to advance to the Seine on a four-corps front, with the Canadian First Army on the left and the British Second Army on the right. With the British I Corps aiming to cross the River Risle at Pont-Audemer, the Canadian II Corps was to thrust towards Elbeuf through Vimoutiers and Bernay. On the right wing, the Second Army would push two corps forward, the XII Corps on the left to reach the Seine at Louviers and the XXX Corps on the right, aiming at Vernon. VIII Corps was to be held near Vire in army group reserve, its transport having been added to the general pool to speed up the advance of the other corps.

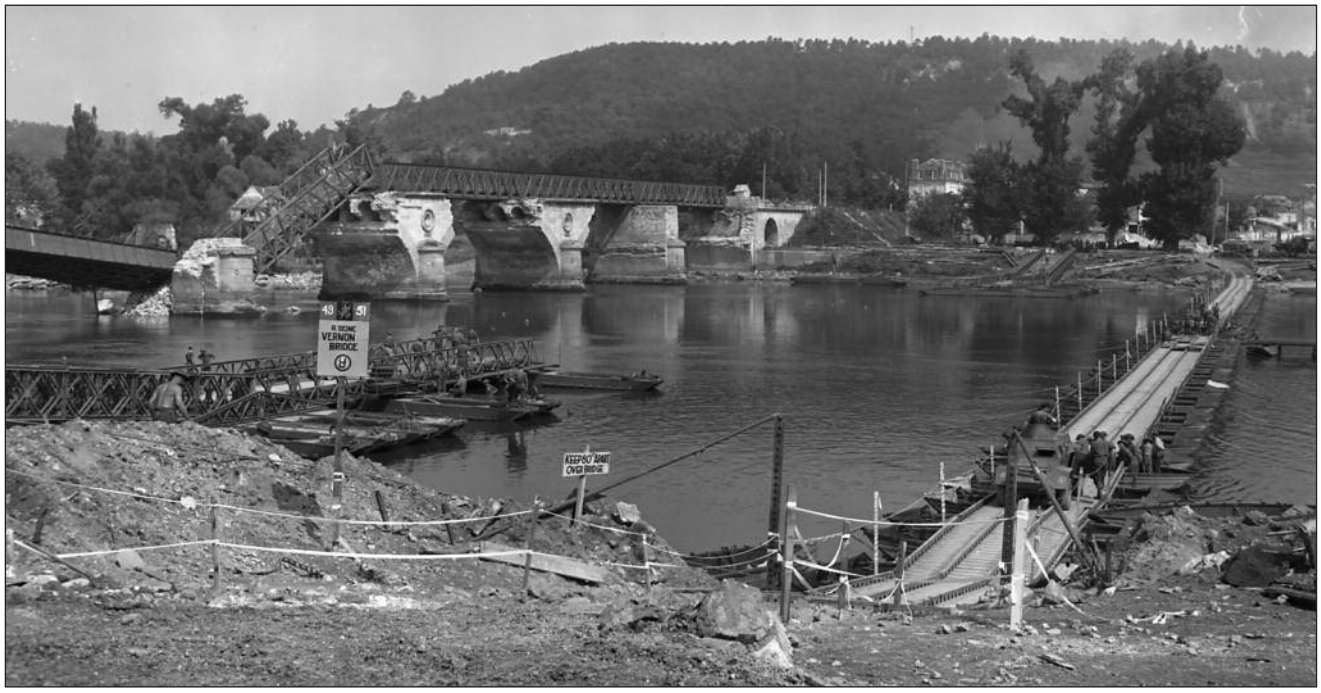
As had been anticipated since before D-Day, the shortage of trained infantry reserves was now acute within 21st Army Group and some formations had to be disbanded to provide replacements for other units. The junior 59th (Staffordshire) Division had been chosen as the first to go and it was now removed from XII Corps and the 15th (Scottish) Division allocated in its place.

The XXX Corps started eastwards from the Chambois area on August 20. Having passed through American forces north-east of Argentan, the leading troops of the 11th Armoured Division reached the Touques river near Gacé on the evening of the 21st. Some stiff opposition was outflanked and L'Aigle was taken on the following day. The 50th (Northumbrian) Division was committed on the 23rd whereupon it cleared the large Breteuil forest lying behind the Risle river.

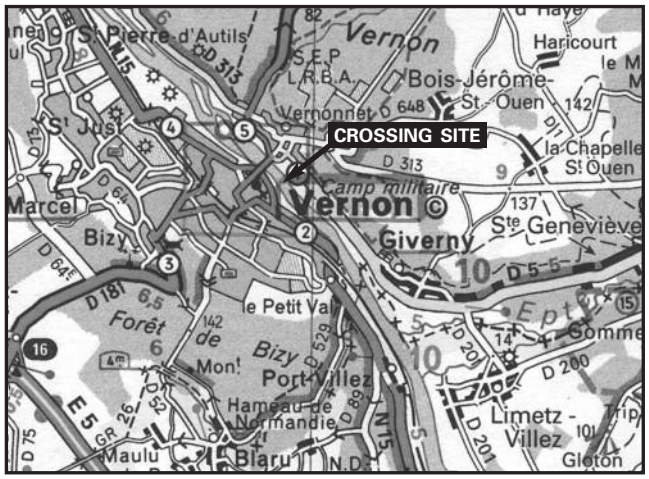
Lieutenant-General Brian Horrocks, the XXX Corps commander, had detailed the 43rd (Wessex) Division to force the Seine crossing at Vernon. Organised in three groups, on August 24 the division advanced for two four-hour stints along the single route crossing the American line of withdrawal, and by the afternoon of the next day the leading group that was to assault the Seine was assembled under cover behind Vernon. The 129th Brigade forced the crossing at 7 p.m. against only light opposition and a battalion and a half was transported across during the night. Engineers started bridging the river and, though they were held up for a time by enemy fire, a Class 9 bridge was completed by late afternoon on the 26th. The two leading battalions of the 214th Brigade then crossed over. On the 27th, while the leading units pushed out to the high ground overlooking the bridgehead with the 214th Brigade on the left and the 129th on the right, the 130th Brigade began crossing. Some tanks of the 8th Armoured Brigade were ferried across early on the 27th, a timely move as they helped repulse a German counter-attack which was supported by Tiger IIs of SS-Panzer-Abteilung 101.

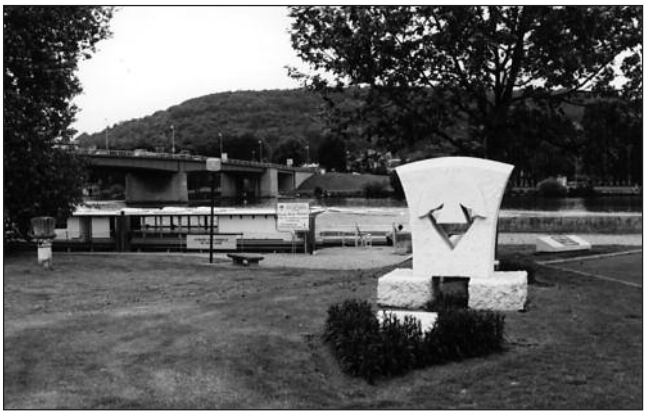
The 5th Wiltshires and the 4th Somerset Light Infantry were to lead the assault and the 1st Worcestershires (of the 214th Brigade) was to follow. A bombardment was carried out from H minus 15 minutes to H-Hour, and from H-Hour a smoke screen was laid on the far bank. (IWM)

The assault went according to plan. Next morning, men of the 4th Wiltshires give covering fire as the smoke screen drifts on the eastern bank. The unit was the 129th Brigade reserve battalion and these men were to cross by midday. (IWM)



The first bridge at Vernon, a Class 9 baptised 'David' by the engineers, was built upstream of the demolished road bridge. It is on the right in this picture taken early on the 27th when work had started on 'Goliath', the Class 40 Bailey seen left. (USNA)





A memorial now stands on the spot where the approach ramps to the floating bridges once lay.

The 50th Division followed on the morning of the 26th, being allowed one six-hour slot on two routes for it to pass through the US line of withdrawal. However, the allocation proved to be insufficient, all the more so because the last group of the 43rd Division was still moving on the same roads. The XXX Corps was given another six-hour segment on the 27th and American units finally cleared the sector early on August 28. By then the 11th Armoured Division was crossing the Seine at Vernon.

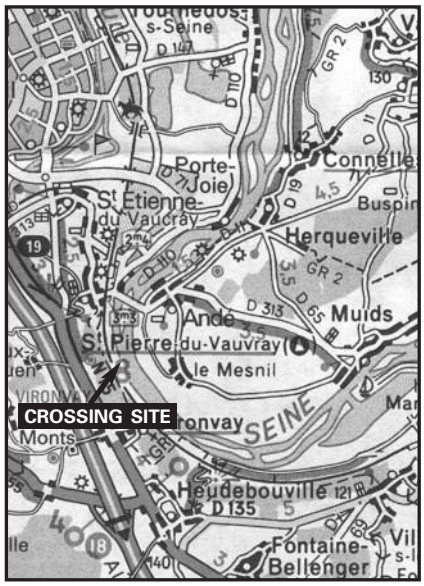
Lieutenant-Colonel T. I. Lloyd, who commanded 7th Troops Engineers wrote in his report: 'By 3.30 p.m., August 26, things were quiet, and the Chief Engineer sent us word to start the job. 73rd Field Company built from the near bank, 71st Field Company from the far bank, 72nd Field Company launched the pontoons initially, and built floating bays latterly. 73rd Field Company had a stiff job with their landing bay. They had to deal with a very large bomb crater and to cut away a lot of the masonry in the facing wall before they could start. Then they had a downhill launch involving extra preventers. The other snag was the approaches, which cost both 73rd and 71st Field Companies a lot of effort. The first thing to cross the bridge was a dozer at 5.45 p.m., but work was still going on particularly on the approaches, so we didn't open it to operational traffic until shortly after 7.30 p.m.' *Left:* **A Sherman tank crossing by means of 'Goliath' on August 28. (IWM)**

BRITISH XII CORPS, SAINT-PIERRE-DU-VAUVRAY

The XII Corps had had to wait for the Canadians to move before they could set off and the leading troops met American patrols on the Risle south-east of Bernay on the 24th. The advance continued but the British were stopped on the temporary army group boundary near Neufbourg for two days by elements of the American XIX Corps driving north across their front.

On the 26th, while the XIX Corps moved southward, the 15th (Scottish) Division reached Louviers with plans to assault the Seine the following day. The 227th Brigade crossed in stormboats near Saint-Pierre-du-Vauvray in the early evening of the 27th, followed by DUKWs, and suffered heavy losses yet a second brigade, the 44th, crossed a few kilometres downstream, near Portejoie, against little opposition. By midday on the 28th, the two brigades had joined up and extended the bridgehead eastwards along the loop of the river. The third brigade, the 46th, got across without difficulty at Muids, eight kilometres upstream from Saint-Pierre-du-Vauvray, early on the 28th. While engineers rafted anti-tank guns and carriers across the river, others built a Class 9 bridge at Muids which was open to traffic before midnight. A Class 40 one for tanks was soon ready at Saint-Pierre-du-Vauvray. By August 29, Les Andelys had been incorporated into the bridgehead and the high ground overlooking it secured. Soon patrols were in touch with the Vernon bridgehead further upstream.

The original caption of this picture taken by Captain Derrick Knight on August 28 states it shows 'troops marching through the village of Andé on their way to embark in boats for crossing the Seine' — a somewhat surprising text as Andé is on the far bank of the Seine, beyond the river. These are men of the 15th (Scottish) Division. (IWM)



We found that the picture had actually been taken at Saint-Pierre-du-Vauvray, on the western bank of the Seine, so these troops are indeed on their way to go across. This is the Grand Rue, looking westwards, with Rue Gourdon just off to the right.

Captain Knight also pictured these men observing the Seine and the destroyed bridge between Saint-Pierre-du-Vauvray and Andé. (IWM)

Although the concrete fencing has been renewed, the wall on the corner of the post office on the right is still the same, as is the tree in the centre.

Left: **The construction of a Class 40 Bailey pontoon bridge was started at Saint-Pierre-du-Vauvray on August 29, some distance upstream from the destroyed bridge. (IWM)** *Right:* **Though trees now hide the houses on the far bank that enable to pinpoint the place, this is an exact comparison. To reach this spot, take the road to the right after the railway crossing at Saint-Pierre-du-Vauvray, and drive along to the rear end of the football field.**

Sappers of the 6th Troops Engineers at work at Saint-Pierre-du-Vauvray. It was standard procedure that while one field company assembled the floating bays, another company built the bridge from the near bank and a third from the far bank. (IWM)

By August 29, the XII Corps had extended its bridgehead eastwards taking in the town of Les Andelys.

Left: **The 6th Troops Engineers then built another Class 40 Bailey bridge just upstream from the destroyed bridge there below the Château Gaillard (see centre pages). Sergeant Jimmy Mapham took this picture of locals joyfully greeting the Scottish troops at Les Andelys on the 31st. He noted that Mr Scarlett, British citizen, had married and settled there in 1915, hence the 'extra special welcome'. (IWM)** *Right:* **Rue Saint-Jacques in 2002. The Hôtel des Fleurs is no longer in business.**

Left: **Lieutenant Don Grant, an AFPU photographer with the Canadian II Corps, on August 27 pictured these German prisoners passing the dead body of an SS man at Elbeuf. Though the original caption states that this German had removed his boots to try to swim across the Seine, Daniel Rose of Rouen drew our attention to another picture published in September 1944 which shows three youngsters moving off with the boots they had taken from the dead body! (NAC)** *Right:* **Looking downstream today. The house in the background has been demolished and this is the best comparison that can be taken on Rue d'Orival.**

CANADIAN II CORPS, ELBEUF

On the 24th, the advance elements of the Canadian II Corps reached Bernay. The historian of the 10th Infantry Brigade wrote: 'Will Bernay ever be forgotten? Bernay where the people stood from morning till night at times in the pouring rain, and at times in the August sun. Bernay where they never tired of waving, of throwing flowers or fruit, of giving their best wines and spirits to some halted column . . .' The following day, the corps' three divisions — the 2nd on the left, the 3rd in the centre and the 4th Armoured on the right — bridged and crossed the Risle to link up with elements of the US XIX Corps near Elbeuf. The Canadians relieved the Americans of responsibility for Elbeuf on August 26.

At 5 p.m. that same day, a company-sized patrol of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment (10th Infantry Brigade, 4th Armoured Division) crossed the Seine near Criquebeuf, using shovels to propel a small boat. They took up a position on the northern bank and next morning the rest of 10th Brigade followed in stormboats to develop the bridgehead. However they met heavy opposition

Late on August 26 the Canadian II Corps took over Elbeuf from the US XIX Corps which had just cleared the area after the Germans had finally withdrawn across the river the previous night. Recalling another controversy two months previously, when there had been a debate between the British and Americans over who had captured the town of Vire in Normandy, the Americans demanded a formal receipt for Elbeuf before they agreed to turn the town over to the Canadians. Another Canadian photographer, Lieutenant Ken Bell, pictured this carrier passing a PzKpfw IV abandoned in Elbeuf on the 27th. (NAC)

Little opposition was met in crossing at Elbeuf on the 27th and before nightfall the 9th Field Squadron, Royal Canadian Engineers, had two tank-carrying rafts into operation there. The 8th Troops Engineers worked throughout the night and by early next morning had completed this Class 40 Bailey pontoon bridge which they named 'Gray'. Here, two Sherman Flail tanks cautiously move across on August 31. The view is from the northern bank, with the town of Elbeuf opposite (IWM)

from elements of the 17. Feld-Division (L) which was determined to block the approaches to Rouen. The Germans successfully held the high ground north of Sotteville and Igoville during the day.

Though determined to defend their positions east of Elbeuf, the Germans were however too weak to hold the low-lying river loop opposite the city, and elements of the 3rd Division met little opposition in making the crossing here and taking Saint-Aubin. Before nightfall on the 27th, two tank-carrying rafts were in operation at Elbeuf and a Class 40 Bailey pontoon bridge capable of carrying tanks was completed early next morning.

Left: **The same Class 40 Bailey bridge, this time seen from the southern bank. Youngsters of Elbeuf had come to marvel at the incessant flow of vehicles crossing over the bridge and obviously Sergeant Albert Wilkes had asked to them to wave and cheer while he took his picture. (IWM)** *Right:* **The church of Saint-Aubin, the town on the northern bank opposite Elbeuf, enables us to take this approximate comparison just a few metres upstream from the present-day road bridge.**

The Canadians advanced northwards from their Elbeuf bridgehead. On August 29, while on the right tanks of the 4th Armoured Brigade drove north-eastwards, the 3rd Division, with the 9th Infantry Brigade leading, moved towards Rouen. They were at Bonsecours on the morning of the 30th and in the early afternoon reached the south-eastern outskirts of Rouen. Here, Jeeps and carriers move down the Route de Bonsecours, with the Saint Paul's Church in the background. (IWM)

Jean Paul had to exercise patience to achieve this comparison for not only did he have to juggle with the incessant flow of vehicles but the clouds were playing cat and mouse with the sun as well. It took nearly one hour before he finally succeeded in taking this comparison without being run over by cars coming up from behind.

Left: **Following the order to turn to general action given out on August 27, the FFI had started to cut telecommunication cables, ambush isolated German cars and lorries, and liaise with the leaders of the approaching Canadians. On the morning of August 30, a group under Roger Duboc took over a flak battery in Rouen without firing a shot, for the few remaining Germans just saluted and left! At 3.15 p.m., the French tricolour was raised in front of the Hôtel de Ville. A local photographer, Raymond Jacques, took this picture from the town hall balcony of FFI fighters exchanging shots with some German rear-guard parties. In about an hour, around 4 p.m., the lead units of the Canadian 9th Brigade would reach the main square below. (R. Jacques)** *Right:* **It took Jean Paul some time to talk his way up to the balcony, but this nice comparison was certainly worth the effort.**

Plans to send the 4th Armoured Brigade (of the 4th Armoured Division) into the Criquebeuf bridgehead were cancelled and instead the division was moved to the 3rd Division's secure Elbeuf bridgehead on the 28th. By nightfall, the two Canadian divisions were strongly established on the low hills north of Igoville. The advance continued on the 29th and the tanks of the 4th Armoured Brigade reached Boos and, nearer to the river, the infantry got to within eight kilometres of Rouen.

On the corps left wing, the 2nd Division had met heavy opposition in the La Londe forest from the 26th against elements of various units including Grenadier-Regiment 559 which was holding fast to cover the withdrawal in the Rouen loop. After three days, these hard-fighting elements finally withdrew on the 29th, the day which saw the end of the resistance west of the Seine. The last Germans escaped across the river under cover of heavy rain.

On the afternoon of the 30th, the 9th Infantry Brigade leading the Canadian 3rd Division entered Rouen to find the city virtually deserted. Brigadier John Rockingham, the brigade commander, was the first into the main square where he exchanged shots with a lone German from his armoured car.

The FFI men quickly took the Canadians to places where Germans were still resisting and this carrier is just returning from such a mission. The Jeep that can be seen behind was bringing in American airmen from downed aircraft who had been sheltered by the FFI. The resistance lost no time to proudly deliver them to the Canadians. (R. Jacques)

Left: **Lieutenant-General Henry Crerar, the commander of the Canadian First Army, was quick to visit Rouen where he was greeted by the Mayor, M. René Stackler. Though thrilled by the capture of this major town of France, Crerar was worried for the strong German resistance in front of the Canadian II Corps had left its formations depleted. This was particularly true for the 2nd Division whose nine infantry battalions had a combined deficient of over 1,900 men (the two French-speaking units were worst off, the Fusiliers Mont-Royal being 331 men short and the Régiment de Maisonneuve 246) and for the 4th Armoured Division whose 10th Infantry Brigade was fighting with three rifle companies to a battalion instead of four. (R. Jacques)** *Right:* **Comparison taken in front of the Hôtel de Ville, just below the balcony that appears in the picture at the top.**

Left: **By August 26, the British I Corps was across the Risle river, pushing to the Seine. At Pont-Audemer prisoners are being marched down into the town by men of the FFI. (IWM)**
Above: **The same spot on the N182 on the north side of the town, hardly changed since the war.**

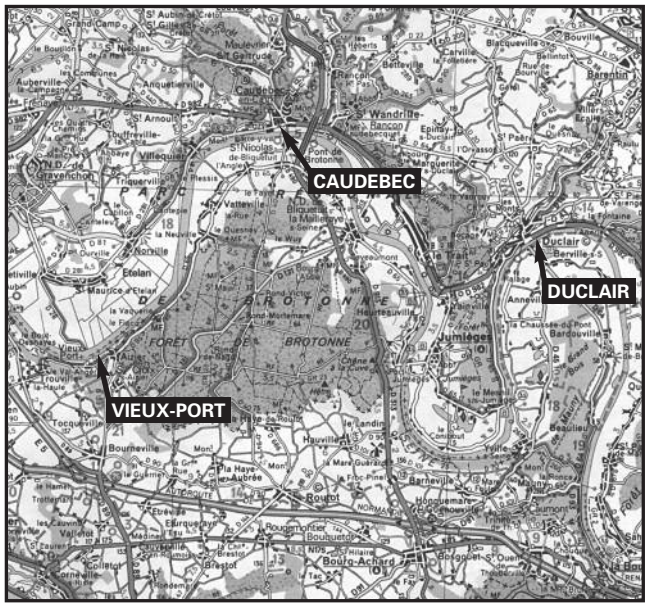
BRITISH I CORPS, DUCLAIR, CAUDEBEC AND VIEUX-PORT

To the north, while the Canadian II Corps battled to close the Trun-Chambois gap, the British I Corps had been pressing eastwards aiming for the Seine downstream of Rouen. On August 16 units crossed the Dives river in the coastal sector while troops of the 6th Airborne Division broadened the offensive by attacking in the marshes near Cabourg. Progress was slow for the Germans conducted a very clever staged withdrawal, timing with skill the destruction of bridges and other demolitions, leaving obstacles and mines in their wake.

By August 20, the I Corps troops were nearing Pont-l'Evèque and Lisieux and the British 7th Armoured Division had taken Livarot. Two days later, the corps was fighting hard against strong opposition on the River Touques at Lisieux and Pont-l'Evèque and it was not until the 26th that the line of the Risle from Montfort to the sea was in Allied hands.

German forces were still holding out in the Brotonne forest covering the Seine crossings at Caudebec-en-Caux, but these troops withdrew on the 29th and the advance was then only slowed by the denseness of the forest. On the afternoon of the 30th, elements of the 51st (Highland) Division crossed the Seine at Duclair while the 49th (West Riding) Division crossed at Caudebec and Vieux-Port. At both places the Germans had withdrawn.

Having taken the picture at the top of this page, Sergeant Wilkes drove up the road to the first curve where he stopped to picture locals cheering at transport of the 49th (West Riding) Division heading northwards in the direction of Quillebeuf. (IWM)

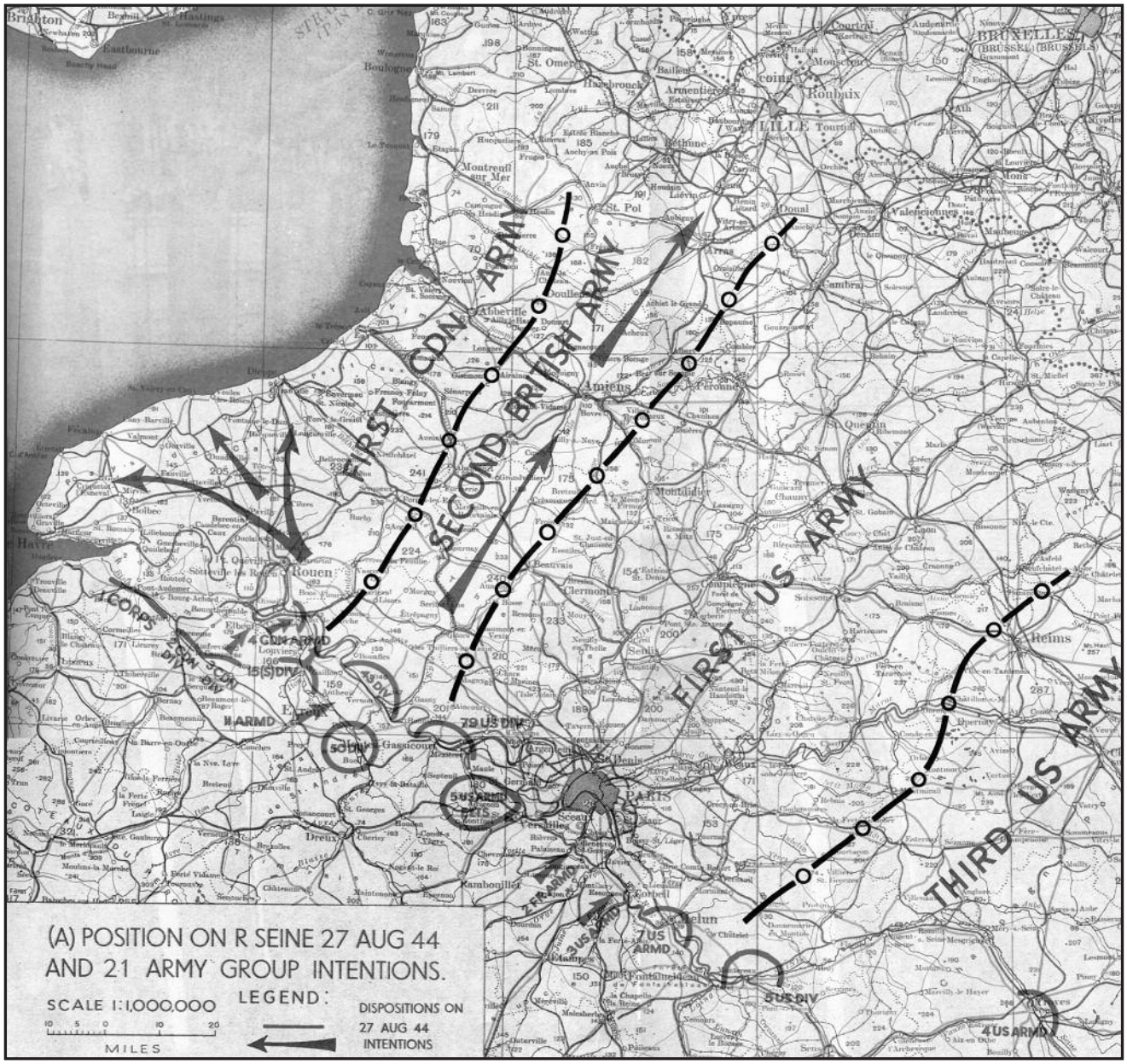


The same view today, looking south in the direction of Pont-Audemer.

Left: **In his caption to this 'view of the country in which we are fighting', Sergeant Wilkes noted that the village in the background was Fontaine-Noye. (IWM)** *Right:* **A place of that name does not exist and Jean Paul had to decide first that the valley was that of the Risle river before he finally found that the village was in fact Appeville-Annebault, 12 kilometres upstream from Pont-Audemer. The road is the D89. Though trees now completely hide the background, this is the same spot.**

On their way to the Seine at Quillebeuf, troopers of A Squadron of the 49th Reconnaissance Regiment, 49th (West Riding) Division, have taken another group of dispirited prisoners, mostly Russians according to the original caption. (IWM)

Left: **At the crossroads of the D139 from Pont-Audemer and the N89 from Appeville-Annebault lies the village of Bourneville. It is six kilometres from Vieux-Port where the 49th Division crossed the Seine. This picture was taken on August 31 at the western entrance of the village. (IWM)** *Right:* **Our comparison taken in the early morning light.**



THE DRIVE BEYOND THE SEINE

On August 25, the honour of performing the most dramatic act of liberation to take place in France was carried out by the French armoured unit, the 2ème Division Blindée, and the US 4th Infantry Division. Three days earlier Eisenhower had ordered Major General Leonard T. Gerow to move his V Corps from the Argentan section to the French capital, but the two divisions found the city unscathed and all its bridges intact (see *After the Battle* No. 14). V Corps thus established yet another bridgehead across the Seine.

It was now time to turn to the pursuit of the enemy beyond the Seine and that same day, August 25, the command was adjusted, the boundary between the US First and Third Armies being shifted south of Paris, with the line of Chartres, Etampes and Melun going to First Army. At 6 a.m. on the 24th, the XV Corps in the Mantes bridgehead had passed from the control of Third Army to First Army and on the following day the Third relinquished the Melun bridgehead to the First. VII Corps then took over from XX Corps which had moved eastwards. First Army now had three corps abreast, from north to south, XV Corps, V Corps and VII Corps, each one having a bridgehead across the Seine.

US THIRD ARMY

South of Paris, Third Army now consisted of two corps, the XX and XII. The XX Corps had two bridgeheads across the Seine, at Samoreau and Montereau, while the XII Corps (which had been relieved of the responsibility of guarding the Loire west of Orléans by the extension of VIII Corps' boundary) had one at Troyes.

To flesh out the XII Corps for the drive to the Meuse, Patton moved the 80th Infantry Division from Orléans and added it to Eddy's corps. Then, while CCB of the 4th Armored Division swept the corps area and the 35th Division took on protecting the right flank from Orléans to Troyes, CCA sped 80 kilometres to Vitry-le-François and jumped the Marne. While CCA drove down the east bank of the river towards Châlons, the 80th Division moved along the western bank and by noon on August 29 a double envelopment secured Châlons.

The XII Corps was by then out of fuel but the fortunate capture of 100,000 gallons of German spirit, mostly at Châlons, enabled it to continue, though at a slower pace, toward the Meuse. On the morning of August 31, in heavy rain, a light company in advance of the main body of CCA surprised the German outposts at Commercy and seized a bridge across the Meuse river intact.

With the 90th Division added to XX Corps, after its move from Argentan the corps started out on August 25. The 7th Armored Division attacked from the Melun bridgehead, encountering opposition from scattered elements of the 48. and 338. Infanterie-Divisions and some tanks of the 17. SS-Panzergrenadier-Division. Attacking from the Montereau bridgehead on the 26th, the 5th Division met somewhat less opposition and took Nogent-sur-Seine and Romilly.

The 5th Division then seized Provins and General Walker directed the 7th Armored to thrust north-east to Reims. While the 5th Division followed on the right and the 90th Division on the left, the 7th Armored spearheaded the attack. On the 28th, with two combat commands abreast, no less that six columns were driving ahead in the hope of grabbing one or two bridges over the Marne intact. Only small pockets of resistance were encountered so CCA and CCR jumped ahead to Château-Thierry and seized several bridges there. Continuing to the Aisne on the 29th, the combat commands wheeled eastwards and cut the roads north of Reims. The 5th Division liberated the city on August 30.

By noon on August 31, the 7th Armored had reached Verdun and was across the Meuse, the FFI having prevented demolition of the bridges in the city.

Left: **On August 29, when the US XIX Corps took over the Mantes bridgehead, the 82nd Engineers Combat Battalion erected a treadway bridge to support the corps breakout from the bridgehead. (USNA)** *Right:* **We discovered that this new bridge had been built at Meulan, 15 kilometres upstream from Mantes, and just beyond the destroyed road bridge connecting Les Mureaux on the southern bank and Meulan on the northern bank. This is the view from the Quai du Bailliage at Meulan.**

US FIRST ARMY

On August 25, VII Corps of Major General J. Lawton Collins took over the Melun bridgehead from XX Corps which by then was moving eastwards. The 3rd Armored Division started crossing over the existing bridge at Tilly on the night of the 25th while the division's engineers built a second treadway bridge which was ready and put to use by daylight.

During the day the 3rd Armored pushed north-eastwards and quickly unhinged the LVIII. Panzerkorps' thin line of defence. (Although they did not realise it at the time, near Fontenay-Trésigny the leading tanks of CCA had passed within a kilometre or so of the command post of the German 1. Armee.) The points reached and crossed the Marne at La Fertée (CCA) and Meaux (CCB) the next day. The 1st and 9th Infantry Divisions followed. The Aisne was crossed at Soissons and east of it on the 28th and by the last day of the month, the leaders were at Rethel and Montcornet. At Braine, 15 kilometres east of Soissons, where the French stationmaster had told to the leaders that a German train coming from Paris was due in 15 minutes, Sergeant Hollis Butler had pulled his AA carriage mounting a 37mm gun and a dual .50 machine gun out of the column to cover the railway. The locomotive was quickly disabled and the AA outfit attacked in squad formation to capture the train with 36 cars and 70 prisoners.

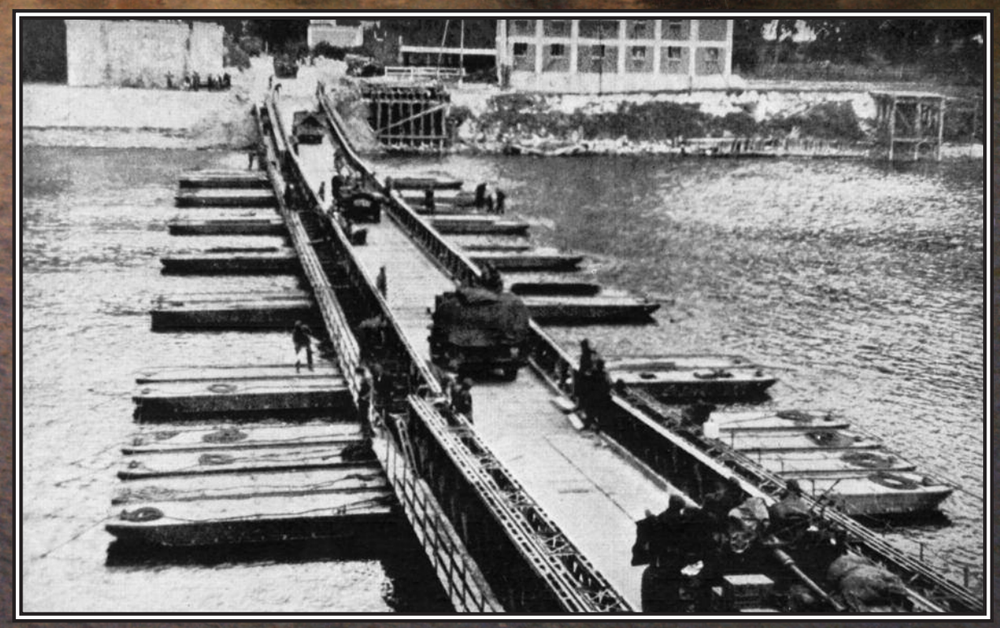
Having completed the liberation of Paris, V Corps joined in the pursuit on the 29th when, after having paraded through the city, the 28th Infantry Division joined up with the 4th Division. Two days later, the 5th Armored Division passed through the two infantry divisions to take the lead. Its three combat commands began pushing through the Compiègne forest but stubborn German resistance and the poor terrain soon brought General Gerow to decide to let the 4th Division take the lead in clearing the forest. On the morning of September 1, the corps spearheads crossed the Aisne river between Compiègne and Soissons.

On August 27, the 30th Division had crossed the Seine into the Mantes bridgehead, the 2nd Armored Division following on the 28th, taking over the left flank. The 79th and 30th Divisions then began to expand their hold on the east bank.

At noon on August 29, XV Corps headquarters moved south-east of Paris for a new assignment with Third Army and XIX Corps (Major General Charles H. Corlett) took over command of all three divisions in the bridgehead. With the 2nd Armored leading the advance, XIX Corps pushed north-east against almost no opposition and by the 31st it had advanced some 80 kilometres to the east, on a line between Beauvais and Compiègne.

The US V Corps started on the 29th from the Paris bridgehead and next morning the leading elements of the 28th Infantry Division reached Lamorlaye, 30 kilometres north of the capital. They were enjoying an enthusiastic welcome from the population when suddenly a German convoy entered the town. Unaware of the presence of the Americans, the Germans reached the main street where in a matter of minutes the whole column was smashed to pieces by devastating fire from the US tanks. Those parts of the German force trapped in the side streets were dealt with in the following hour. A few Germans had been killed, many others were taken prisoner, but a sizeable number succeeded to escape on foot northwards in the direction of Gouvieux. (R. Galas via GEMOB)

Looking from the northern end of Lamorlaye southwards along the main street — the N16 — in the direction from where the Americans had entered the town.



On the heels of the infantry formations of the British XXX Corps which had started from the Vernon bridgehead came the Guards Armoured Division. Here, Shermans of the 2nd Grenadier Guards move through Les Thilliers, 20 kilometres north-east of Vernon on August 31. (IWM) *Right:* **They had just crossed the N14 and were pushing eastwards in the direction of Gisors.**

According to AFPU Sergeant 'Jock' Laing he pictured this Cromwell of the 2nd Welsh Guards 'on the outskirts of Gisors'. (IWM)

BRITISH SECOND ARMY

At first light on August 29, two armoured brigade groups started out from the Vernon bridgehead in heavy rain and thick mist, the 29th Armoured Brigade (of 11th Armoured Division) on the left, and the 8th Armoured Brigade (Independent) on the right. The poor weather and small parties of Germans holding out at crossroads kept the advance down to 30 kilometres yet 1,000 prisoners were taken. Once the weather improved, the force drove forward with increased speed, reaching Gisors on the morning of the 30th. Finding usable bridges over the Eppe between Gisors and Gournay, the British reached Beauvais late in the afternoon.

General Horrocks then ordered the 11th Armoured Division to continue to advance through the night to Amiens, the leading tanks of the 29th Armoured Brigade reaching the city early on August 31. General der Panzertruppen Heinrich Eberbach, the 7. Armee commander who had only just reached Amiens to take over from 5. Panzerarmee at noon that day, was captured about 8 a.m. near Saleux by the 2nd Fife and Forfar Yeomanry. The British secured the town with FFI assistance during the morning, cap-

We found that the picture had actually been taken at Trie-Château, four kilometres to the east of Gisors, on the D981 in the direction of Beauvais.

Left: **Approaching Beauvais on the 30th, the lead unit of the 8th Armoured Brigade came across two Tiger tanks near Goincourt at 4.30 p.m. and Major R. R. H. James of the 12th King's Royal Rifle Corps was killed with two of his men before Sherman tanks could deal with the enemy armour. This picture was taken two days later by Fernand Watteeuw, a local photographer who took dozens of great pictures in the first days of the liberation. (F. Watteeuw)** *Right:* **The same spot just west of Beauvais where the D981 coming from Gisors meets with the road from Gournay-en-Bray.**

turing intact the two main bridges over the Somme. By midday, the Guards Armoured Division had also crossed the Somme a few kilometres upstream.

The 53rd (Welsh) Division and the 4th Armoured Brigade had moved up to pass through the Saint-Pierre bridgehead and they headed north-eastwards on the morning of August 29 with the 53rd leading on the left. The division ran into many pockets of resistance but the 4th Armoured Brigade made easier progress and by nightfall on the 31st was north of Poix, just 20 kilometres short of the Somme. The 7th Armoured Division (transferred from I Corps) was catching up and plans were made for it to pass through and seize the Somme bridges at Picquigny and Longpré.

CANADIAN FIRST ARMY

On the morning of the 31st, three divisions of the Canadian II Corps moved rapidly north and north-east from the Rouen sector. On September 1 the Canadian 2nd Infantry Division returned to Dieppe, liquidating its debt of August 1942, and on the following day the Canadian 4th Armoured Division reached the Somme at Abbeville.

On August 31 Beauvais witnessed the endless passage of the Guards Armoured Division moving north-eastwards in the direction of the Somme. Here, a Sherman tank turns the corner of the Esplanade de l'Hôtel Dieu in the centre of the city. The Guards Armoured Division had three armoured regiments equipped with Sherman tanks, the 1st Coldstream Guards, the 2nd Grenadier Guards and the 2nd Irish Guards. Each regiment had three squadrons of five troops of three Sherman tanks, one being a Sherman Firefly armed with a 17-pdr. In addition, the Regimental HQ Squadron had a Recce Troop equipped with 11 Stuart light tanks, one Intercom Troop with nine scout cars and one Anti-Aircraft Troop with eight Crusader AA tanks. (F. Watteeuw)

Left: **At this same corner, Fernand Watteeuw pictured this Cromwell armoured recovery vehicle of the 5th Guards Armoured Brigade Workshop. A Jeep and a half-track of the 19th Light Field Ambulance have stopped at the corner. The unit's tactical number, 89, appears under the Jeep windscreen, as does the Guards' divisional sign: the 'ever open eye' inherited from the Guards Division of the First World War. (F. Watteeuw)** *Right:* **This five-street crossroads with Boulevard Docteur Lamotte in the background and Rue de Calais arriving from the right is still the major road junction in Beauvais.**

Meanwhile, the British I Corps turned westwards into the Le Havre peninsula with the mission to secure the harbour, and on September 2, the 51st (Highland) Division took Saint-Valéry where the balance of the division had been captured in June 1940.

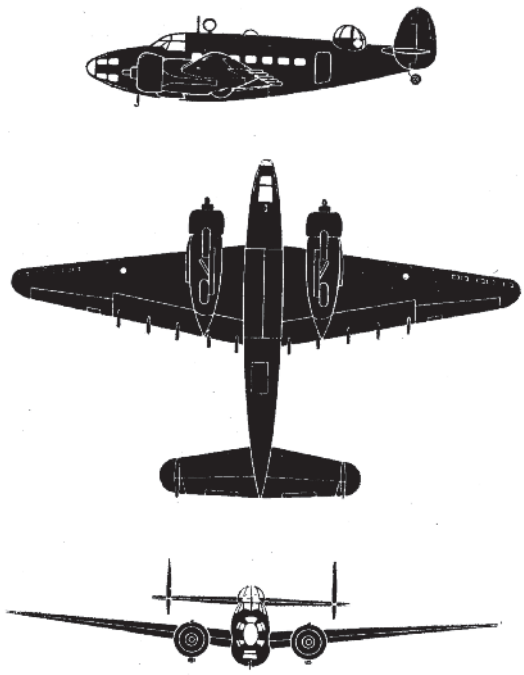
The concerted operation by American, British and Canadian forces to cross the Seine had been successfully accomplished at over a dozen crossing points along a 350-kilometre frontage from Rouen to south of Paris. They had however failed in their plan to destroy the German forces west of the Seine and a surprisingly large number of men had succeeded in extricating themselves. Nevertheless, few if any of the German units which escaped across the Seine were in any condition to continue the fight. Instead of

Fernand Watteeuw then pictured a Cromwell tank of the 2nd Welsh Guards heading eastwards up Boulevard Docteur Lamotte. Cheering crowds packed along the street to welcome their liberators was to be a feature of the advance through France and the Low Countries. For many, it seemed to be the done thing to be liberated in one's Sunday best! The 2nd Welsh Guards were initially the division reconnaissance regiment, hence they were equipped with the fast Cromwell tanks, but the return of the 2nd Household Cavalry to the division had removed the need for the Welsh Guards to remain a reconnaissance unit. The division took the opportunity to reorganise itself into four permanent battle groups each consisting of an armoured and an infantry battalion from the Grenadiers, the Coldstream, the Irish and the Welsh Guards. Although they were switched when necessary, the Grenadiers and Irish Groups usually formed the 5th Brigade and the Coldstream and Welsh groups made up the 32nd Brigade. (F. Watteeuw)

This crew of the 2nd Welsh Guards poses for Fernand Watteeuw in front of their Cromwell tank on Boulevard Docteur Lamotte. Sometime later, Brigadier Norman Gwatkin, the commander of the 5th Guards Armoured Brigade, was also to pose standing in front of his Jeep for Watteeuw's Voigtlander camera. Brigadier Gwatkin then left, only to be lightly wounded on the outskirts of the city by a sniper. These pictures, along with many others taken by Watteeuw in and around the city in the days of the liberation have been published by the GEMOB in a superb book, *La libération dans l'Oise et à Beauvais*. (F. Watteeuw)

pausing at the Seine as it had been planned for regrouping and amassing supplies, the Allied armies had quickly crossed the river and just kept on going. The Germans had been unable to form a cohesive battle line and whatever resistance they showed was to a large extent the product of individual initiative on the part of the lower echelons. The Allied drive reached its zenith in the first ten days of September and on the 11th a patrol of the 5th Armored Division, V Corps, crossed the frontier and entered Germany. By that day, D+97, the Allied armies had reached a general line which pre-invasion planners had expected would not be gained until D+330, and most of the distance had been covered in the last 48 days. A resounding success in less than 100 days.

Left: **A Scammell SV/2S heavy recovery tractor is brought in to remove a Tiger II tank from the main intersection of the Boulevard du Palais and the Boulevard Docteur Lamotte. Some time earlier, Royal Engineers had already blown off the long gun barrel which was a hindrance to the traffic. This Tiger had stopped here, at the top of Boulevard du Palais, only a few minutes before the leading elements of the 8th Armoured Brigade had entered Beauvais in the afternoon of August 30. It apparently had troubles with its tracks and all the crew had left except two who stayed with the tank. A Sherman had then opened fire at the Tiger from the other end of the boulevard. The first two shells missed and hit buildings behind but the third was on target. It had no real effect but convinced the two remaining crew members to get out and run away. (F. Watteeuw)** *Right:* **But for the electricity transformer tower which has been superseded by new technology, this corner of Beauvais has remained unchanged. On the left is Boulevard Amyot d'Inville (ex-Boulevard du Palais), and on the right Rue Antoine Caron. The wall visible in the right background was, and still is, part of the local prison.**

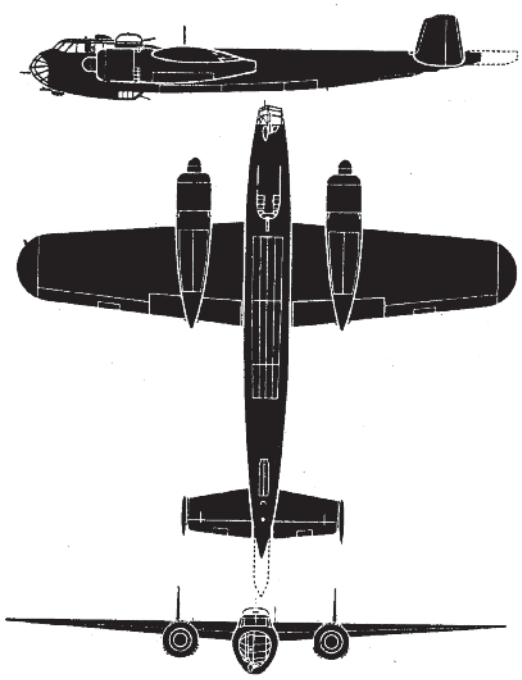


HUDSON

Reconnaissance bomber(2-Cyclone)
S 65′ 6″ L 44′ 4″ Sp 224-254

May be seen without turret. Lockheed 14 *similar, with filled-in nose* (*See Sect. K*). *U.S.Ar.: A*-28 *& A*-29. *Some U.S. versions have gun position in place of turret*

MAKER: Lockheed. **WINGS:** Low mid: dihedral and taper from roots: sharp rounded tips: flap spines on trailing edge. **ENGINES:** Two radial: set rather low. **FUSELAGE:** Deep: straight top: curved bottom line to high tail: pointed glazed nose. **TAIL:** Twin in-board fins and rudders: egg-shaped. **U/C:** Backwards retracting into nacelles. **ORIGIN:** U.S.A.



DORNIER Do 217

Bomber(2-BMW 802) S 62′ 5″ L 58′ 6″ Sp 255-324

Do. 217 *E2 shown. May be seen without detachable tail-piece.* 217 *E1 has no top turret and BMW* 801 *engines*

MAKER: Dornier. **WINGS:** Shoulder: no dihedral: equi-taper: rounded tips. **ENGINES:** Two radial: underslung: nacelles just project behind wings. **FUSELAGE:** Straight top line: swept-up under-curve: glazed bulbous front. **TAIL:** Twin outrigged fins and rudders: 'sand castle' effect: protruding tail-piece. **U/C:** Backwards retracting into nacelles. **ORIGIN:** Germany.

FRIENDLY-FIRE INCIDENT

By Phil Mertens

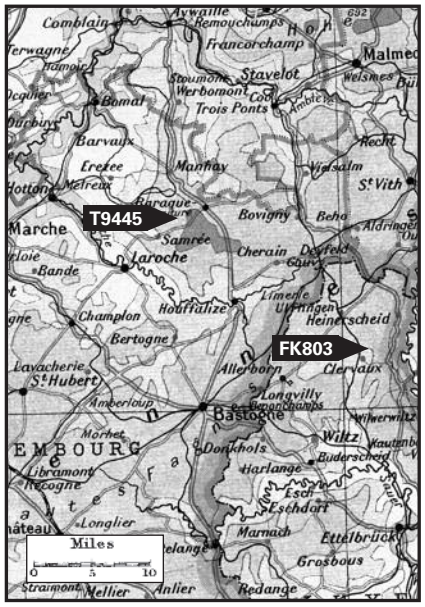
On the night of March 20/21, 1945, over 500 RAF aircraft were despatched to bomb Continental targets. The majority were to attack the oil refineries at Böhlen and Hemmingstedt but a variety of other targets were also on the agenda. At the same time, the special duties squadron based at Tempsford in Bedfordshire, No. 161 (the other SD squadron No. 138, had been transferred to Tuddenham earlier that month), despatched eight Stirlings and five Hudsons on operations to support the Resistance in Europe. The Stirlings were dropping supplies while the Hudsons on Operation 'Walnut' were to deliver agents behind enemy lines in Germany with the task of disrupting road and rail communications.

Hudson T9445, coded NA-O, was to parachute an SOE agent east of the Allied bridgehead across the Rhine at Remagen to blow up the railway line between Betzdorf and Wissen (south-west of Siegen) but, as the agent left the aircraft, the bag containing the explosives, which was attached to his leg, caught on the aircraft and was lost. He landed successfully but, with no means of completing his task, he aborted the mission and returned to Allied lines.

However, three of the Hudsons failed to return, NA-O (T9445) crashing near Dochamps in Belgium and NA-N (FK803) near Hupperdange in Luxembourg. The third aircraft was NA-L (AE595) which force landed on the munitions depot at Rheine airfield. The crew, Flying Officer George Ragan, Flight Sergeant Cecil Thomas and WO1 Frank Gray, were buried by the Germans in Königsesch Cemetery in Rheine. They were exhumed after the war and reburied in Reichswald Forest War Cemetery. The other two Hudsons, NA-P and NA-J, returned safely to Tempsford.

The story of the last flight of NA-N (FK803) was recounted in *After the Battle* No. 26, the three crew members that were killed and the three Belgian agents still buried in their original graves at the crash site on the hillside at Maulusmühle. That story was published way back in 1979 when the cause of the crash could not be reliably determined. Since then a long period of research in England, the USA and Canada has enabled me (a member of the Belgian Aviation Archaeology Group) to piece together what happened that night.

A mystery solved, thanks to research by Phil Mertens. This is how we found the crash site of Hudson FK803 from No. 161 Squadron in 1976. (Since then the wreckage has been vandalised — see *After the Battle* No. 107, page 14.)



When he started investigating the crash site that he had been shown near Dochamps, Phil Mertens, the chairman of the Belgain Aircraft Archaeology Group, was unaware of the identity of the aircraft concerned as the majority had been cleared away. It was only when sifting through the small pieces of wreckage which remained that Phil found a wristwatch. Engraved on the case was a name: 'F.O. [Flying Officer] J. E. Traill'.

One of my friends, who has been working for more than 20 years as a wood-logger, told me one day about some aluminium parts lying in a wood near Dochamps. So I went one day with my metal detector and I found a lot of aircraft wreckage, pieces of uniform from a battledress, fragments of leather from a helmet, and a watch case with serial number and name engraved on it.

From the inscription 'F.O.J.E. Traill' I was able to determine that this was the crash site of Hudson NA-O (T9445), which had failed to return on March 20/21, 1945. All the crew were members of the Royal Canadian Air Force. Flying Officer James Traill was one of the two wireless operator/air gunners — the other being Flight Lieutenant Allan Penhale. The pilot was Flight Lieutenant Richard Ferris with Warrant Officer Robert Hutton as the navigator. I discovered that all were buried in Heverlee War Cemetery which lies about 30 kilometres east of Brussels.

I traced the previous history of T9445 and found that from March 1941 to April 1943 it had been with No. 220 Squadron at St Eval and No. 269 at Kaldadarnes and Reykjavik in Iceland on anti-submarine and convoy patrols.

When I asked the Air Historical Branch in London for the cause of the crash I was told that it was 'presumed shot down by US fighters'. The same fate was believed to have been behind the loss of FK803 but to back this up I needed black and white evidence.

Left: **When he was killed, Flying Officer James Traill had only been married for three months, his wedding to Miss Eileen Rogers having taken place in Westminster Cathedral on January 17.** *Right:* **Phil found his grave at Heverlee War Cemetery which was established near Leuven in July 1946. It now contains 977 burials from the Second World War brought in from a wide area and 29 from the 1914-18 war. The four crewmen from Hudson T9445 were first buried at the crash site (map reference P586854) but were exhumed and moved to Heverlee in November 1946. As the remains could not be individually identified, they now lie together but with individual headstones in Joint Graves Nos. 1-4 in Row D of Plot 8.**

Having discovered that Flying Officer Traill belonged to No. 161 Squadron, Phil managed to trace one of the WAAF MT drivers, Mrs Mary Peppin *(left)* **who had served at Tempsford.** *Right:* **Then LACW Mary Harris, she is pictured here with one of her crews as it was her duty to ferry the men to their aircraft.**

I traced a motor transport driver who had served with No. 161 Squadron who was the last person who saw the crew before they took off. She was Mrs Mary Peppin, better known as 'Paddy' by the airmen, and it had been her duty to take the crew to their Hudson that night. She still had in her possession several documents, even a piece of paper listing the crews for that particular night.

161 Squadron — 20th March 1945.

A/C	CAPTAIN	W/OPERATOR	R/GUNNER	E.T.O.	E.T.A.	
STIRLINGS						
"W"	F/L Collis	F/S Robinson	F/S Eldridge	1915	7.15. 0230	✓
"Y"	F/L Kidd	F/S Taylor	F/S Shoqland	1927	7.27 0238	✓
"Z"	F/L Maddera.	W/O Generall	Sgt Berry	1920	7.20 0232	diverted
"A"	F/L Woodward	F/S McCann	F/S Garcia	1923	7.23 0230	✓
"S"	F/O Witt	W/O Sherriff	Sgnt Gigli	1925	7.25 0227	✓
"T"	F/O Crequer	W/O Munro	F/S Burns	1917	7.17 0227	✓
"U"	W/O Potalo	F/S Hammford	F/S Goff	1932	7.32 0226	✓
"X"	W/O Dunnell	Sgt Burt	Sgt Crozall	1930	7.30 0230	✓
HUDSONS						
"O"	F/L Perrin	F/L Pudsle	F/O Traill	2120	9.20 0343	missing
"L"	F/O Ragan	W/O Grey	F/S Thomas	2030	9.30 0124	missing
"P"	F/L Webb	F/O Smith	F/O Thomas	2000	9.00 0157	✓
"N"	F/L Helfer SAFE	F/O Rowcroft KILLED	F/O Thatcher	1908	8.08 0338	missing
"J"	F/O Morris	W/O Lancet	W/O Dunsc[illegible]	1950	8.50 0157	✓

ALL KILLED.

Station Signals Officer
Station Armoury Officer
Squadron M.T.

G O Lane

F/L
for O.C. 161 Squadron R.A.F.

Phil discovered that she had retained the crew list for the night of March 20/21, 1945. When NA-O, L and N failed to return, she anotated the list accordingly, later adding 'killed' when the deaths were confirmed. A unique document. (Note that the fourth crew member, Warrant Officer Robert Hutton, the navigator, is not on the list.)

A 'Black Widow' of the 422nd Night Fighter Squadron. This is 42-5565.

An enquiry to the US Air Force Research Agency at Maxwell Air Force Base in Alabama brought forth copies of the mission reports for the 422nd Night Fighter Squadron which was airborne from its base at A-78 at Florennes/Juzaines. On the night in question, the squadron claimed two enemy aircraft destroyed, summarised as follows:

'One Do 217 destroyed – A/C 5540 – Capt Raymond A. Anderson, pilot, and 2d Lt Robert F. Graham, radar observer.

'One Do 217 destroyed – A/C 5579 – Capt Leonard F. Koehler, pilot, and 1st Lt Louis L. Bost, radar observer.'

The record then went on to explain in detail what had happened to the first aircraft:

'P-61A No. 5540 took off at 2250 hrs on a defensive patrol of the First Army Area W of the Rhine. Two free lance contacts lost due to bad weapon [*sic*]. On returning to the base, GCI [Ground-Control Interception] gave a target approaching from SE at Angels 8-1/2. Made several runs unsuccessfully and then on 3d attempt made a 1½ mi contact on a target jinking violently. Visual was first made on target from 1200 feet, at Angels 3/2, with enemy going at an IAS of 140 to 150 mph. Pilot had to open cowl flaps to stay in position. At 300ft target identified as Do 217. Now the target was flying straight and level for no good reason. Our pilot dropped behind dead astern and fired from 400ft. Enemy A/C almost immediately exploded burning from wing tip to wing tip and passed over the right wing of our fighter. Bandit crashed into the ground and burned. One parachute was seen to open. Weather was CAVU [Ceiling And Visibility Unlimited] with ¼ moon. A/C landed at 0105 hrs, 21 Mar 45.'

The single parachute which was seen to open links this aircraft to Hudson FK803 which crashed at Maulusmühle as there was one survivor from that crash, Flight Lieutenant Anthony Helfer. Because he was the pilot, and had managed to escape the aircraft, after the war he was charged with deserting his crew (see *After the Battle* No. 26, page 53).

The description of the second 'Do 217' kill equates to the other Hudson lost, T9445 down near Dochamps.

'P-61A No. 5579 took off at 0032 hrs on a defensive patrol of the First Army Area W of the Rhine. Had just left this base and climbed up to Angels 10 and contact GCI at 0045 hrs, when pilot observed an A/C explode and burn on the ground in the distance, which was the A/C shot down by P-61 No. 5540. Three or four minutes later was given a target coming from the E at Angels 3. Losing altitude under excellent control made a contact at 1½ mi despite extremely low altitude. The target was still headed W, and at Angels 2, at an IAS of 250 mph. Closed the range and made a visual from 1500ft; enemy taking no evasive action. Pilot was forced to weave on his course to stay in position, and at 500ft identified a Do 217. From dead astern 600ft, opened fire with one burst. Bandit exploded in mid-air, disintegrating with pieces flying off and wreckage fell to the ground where it exploded again and burned. No chutes were seen to open; and kill was accomplished at 0101 hrs. Several fleeting contacts were made but could not be pursued due to low altitude. Weather was CAVU with ¼ moon. A/C landed at 0240 hrs, 21 Mar 45.'

When I received the copies of the reports, Captain Robert Young, the historical officer who handled my enquiry at Maxwell AFB, commented that 'it seems very possible that your Hudson may have fallen victim to P-61A 42-5579. In the dark, there are similarities between the Do 217 and Hudson, each being twin-tailed and twin-engined. Perhaps this was the case — draw your own conclusions.'

The Americans would have been automatically informed of RAF Bomber Command operations but possibly not about the special duty aircraft operating that night.

Having traced Mrs Peppin, I then set about locating the families of the four Canadian airmen who had lost their lives. I discovered that while they had been given the date and place that their loved ones had died, it was not until I informed them did they have any idea of the exact cause of the crash.

One of the families, that of Flight Lieutenant Penhale, still had a letter he had sent them, written on the very day of his last operation. I also learned from the Traills that James had only just been married at Westminster Cathedral in January 1945.

Having seen the families I was determined to honour the memory of these four Canadians and, after two years' negotiations, a memorial was finally unveiled on the crash site near the hamlet of Lamormenil, three kilometres north of Dochamps, on May 29, 1996 in the presence of the Canadian Military Attaché and the Canadian Ambassador to Belgium. James Traill's sisters, Reta and Vera, came to represent all the families and they brought with them from Perth, Ontario, a marble plaque which forms the centrepiece of the memorial.

Dedication of the memorial on the crash site three kilometres north of Dochamps near the hamlet of Lamormenil.

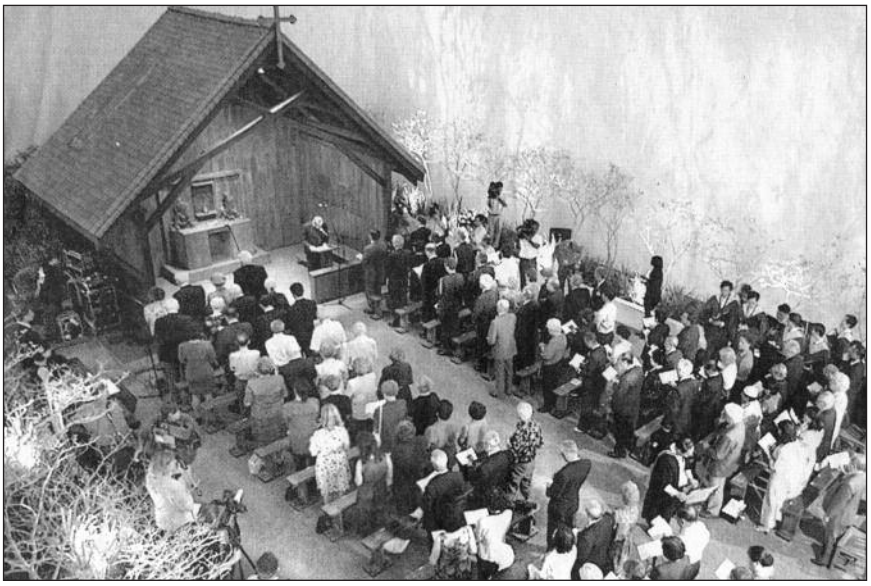
Terry Eckert (left) and John Bradley (right) holding the Stars and Stripes on top of Mount Suribachi during their visit to Iwo Jima on March 14, 2001. Note the small marker on the ground that indicates the precise spot of the original 1945 flag-raising.

From the Editor . . .

It has been over three years since I last sat down to compile this kaleidoscope of readers' letters and follow-ups to stories previously done in the magazine. We would like to include this type of editorial more often but somehow other stories always seem to take precedence or happen to be more topical. All of last year, moreover, I was fully occupied with finishing the two volumes of *Operation 'Market-Garden' Then and Now* which came out on September 16, 2002 — right on the eve of the 58th commemoration of that historic airborne battle.

We want to start this instalment with a marvellous picture that we received from Terry Eckert of Las Vegas, Nevada. Terry visited Iwo Jima (issue 82) in March 2001 with an organised tour and, while on top of Mount Suribachi, had a picture taken of himself and James Bradley. The latter is the son of Marine medic John 'Doc' Bradley — one of the original six flag-raisers on Mount Suribachi immortalised by Joe Rosenthal's picture — and co-author with journalist John Powers of the bestselling *Flags of our Fathers*, published in 2000.

Marty Black, whom our readers will know from several contributions in the past, was of considerable help to James Bradley during the writing of the book. Marty supplied Bradley with details of his (Marty's) meetings and conversations with Bradley Sr (who died in 1994), thus enabling the son to fill in important gaps in his dad's biography. During his lifetime, Bradley had never related anything about Iwo Jima or his part in the flag-raising to his family. In addition Marty carried out library research in the Chicago, Milwaukee and Denver areas to provide Bradley with information on the 7th War Bond Drive in which the three surviving flag-raisers appeared, provided him with pictures of his own trips to Iwo Jima, and proof-read the draft manuscript — Marty says he has 'personal satisfaction that I contributed something to the book and to the memory of the marines.' Steven Spielberg's DreamWorks acquired the screen rights to the book in June 2000 but so far the movie has not yet reached production stage.



On February 15, 2001, on the 59th anniversary of the fall of Singapore (issue 31), a museum was opened in Changi Prison, site of the notorious Japanese camp for Allied prisoners of war. The museum, which is to serve as a lasting reminder of the horrors endured by the prisoners between 1942 and 1945, displays hundreds of photographs and personal items such as diaries, letters and drawings that show life in Changi and other camps. Dozens of former POWs had travelled from Britain, Australia and New Zealand to participate in the opening of the museum. Here they are seen at the consecration service for the Changi chapel which stands in the courtyard of the former prison camp.

The 19 US marines whose remains were recovered in November 1999 from a mass grave on Butaritari island in the Makin atoll by a specialist team of the US Army Central Identification Laboratory from Hawaii (issue 108) have now all been identified. Killed in the Carlson Raid on Makin of August 17-18, 1942, the men had been missing for 57 years when their bodies were recovered. Using dental records and DNA technology, it took the CILHI one year to positively establish their identity, the formal announcement being released in November 2000. As it turned out, the recovered bodies included the 18 marines already known to have been killed in the raid but whose grave had never been found (see our list on page 40 of issue 108), plus one marine who until then had been one of the 12 raiders still listed as 'missing in action': Private Carlyle O. Larson. The 20th body recovered was confirmed to be that of a Butaritari native. The families of six of the raiders — Corporals Yarbrough, Earles, Johnson and Kunkle, Pfc Hicks and Pfc Mortensen — claimed their remains for funeral in their home towns; the other 13 were buried with full military honours in Arlington National Cemetery on August 16, 2001.

As a sequel to the Butaritari mission, in January 2002 a CILHI search and recovery team deployed to the island of Kwajalein (Republic of the Marshall Islands) to begin a search for the remaining nine missing Marine raiders from the Makin Raid, the men who were executed by the Japanese on Kwajalein in October 1942. Though the CILHI specialists conducted excavation of an extensive area on the island, because of radical changes in the landscape and bomb damage that occurred later in the war, pinpointing the mass grave proved to be difficult. Because of the long duration of the search, the team had to be augmented with a follow-on team. On March 21, 2002, after two months of fruitless search, the anthropologist in charge of the team suspended operations at the site pending further investigative work.

An American reader, Matt Poole from Wheaton, Maryland, wrote to correct us on several points regarding Rangoon's POW camp in our story on 'Burma 1945: The Road to Rangoon' (issue 102):

'First, the prison where the POWs were kept was not Insein Prison, as stated in the article. Allied POWs were incarcerated in Rangoon Jail in the heart of the city, not in Insein Prison roughly nine miles north of Rangoon Jail. Insein today is a hell-hole — the Myanmar government's main prison — while Rangoon Jail was torn down 15 or 20 years ago.

The CILHI team searching for the graves of the nine marine raiders executed by the Japanese on the island of Kwajalein in the Central Pacific. (TSgt R. E. Cooley)

'Second, the story of the famous "Japs Gone" and "Extract Digit" rooftop messages is more complicated than stated in the article. There were actually three messages painted, including "British Here".

'When the Japanese abandoned Rangoon, taking with them 400 of the more able-bodied Commonwealth and American prisoners, the men left behind climbed up on the roof and first painted only two words: "Japs Gone". This was seen by overflying RAF aircraft. Two photos showing only the "Japs Gone" message are viewable by searching on "Rangoon" on the Australian War Memorial's database (*www.awm.gov.au/database/photo*), the specific photos being P02491.064 and SUK14323.

'Based upon the photographic record, "Japs Gone" was painted first, and then "British Here" was painted on the same building, but on the opposite roof pitch.

'Despite the two painted messages and the fact that a Beaufighter had clearly investigated the jail and the waving prisoners, an incident occurred on May 2 which caused the prisoners to add the additional "Extract Digit" message to the roof. I quote from *The Rats of Rangoon*, the book by Wing Commander L. V. "Bill" Hudson, RAAF, who was the senior Allied officer at the camp, published in 1987:

"At 9.30 a.m. an RAF Mosquito skip-bombed the gaol wall behind No. 6 compound. We have several casualties but nobody was killed. Within minutes I was surrounded by a bunch of angry faces.

'The sonofabitch . . . what the hell does he think he's doing?'

'If the bastard comes back I'm going to start shooting.'

'I don't believe it . . . surely we are not going to buy it at this stage . . . not with our own bombs?'

I was sick to my stomach. 'Perhaps his idea was to breach the walls so as we could escape', I ventured.

'Can't your RAF pilots read? For God's sake . . . we've been advertising for days that the Japs have gone.'

'Obviously they don't believe our messages on the roof. They must think it's a trick.'

'What can we do about it, sir? How can we get them to pull their finger out?'

'That's it', I said. 'Paint a message on another roof. Just say "Extract Digit". That should stop the bastard.'

'You beauty, they'll know that no Nip could have thought that one up.'

"Extract Digit" was on the roof of No. 7 block in no time, admonishing every pilot who flew over. It helped to calm down the frustration that was building up in the prison."

Adds Mr Poole: 'You can see the "British Here" and "Extract Digit" messages in images SUK14339, SUK14342, P02491.065 and P02491.065 on the AWM database.

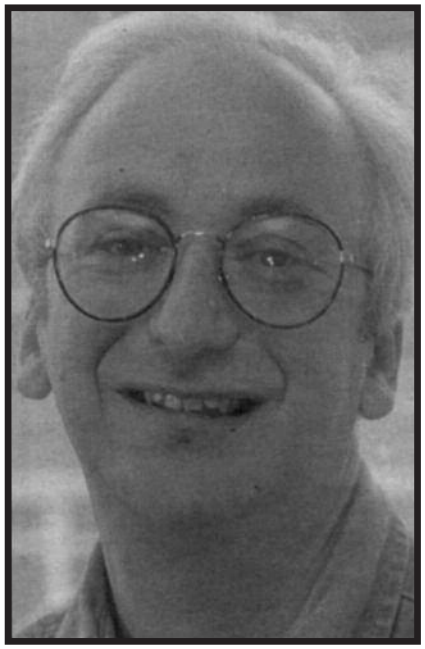
'One final error in the paragraph about the Rangoon Prison reads: "An RAF Mosquito then landed on the racecourse, the crew being the first to confirm the Japanese had fled." Actually, an RAF Mosquito pilot, Wing Commander A. E. Saunders, was the first, officially, to confirm this, but he landed at Mingaladon airfield in Rangoon, not at the racecourse. The incident is described fully on pages 184-185 of Hudson's book. There is an Australian War Memorial photo (P02491.079) of Saunders and his navigator, Flight Lieutenant J. B. Stephens, and two others after the Rangoon fun.'

'Japs Gone' and 'Extract Digit' painted on the roof of Rangoon Prison by Allied POWs, photographed from a supply-dropping RAF Liberator on May 2, 1945. (AWM P02941.065)

It is always a very sad duty to report the death of people associated with *After the Battle*. Particularly heartfelt was the death of George A. Campbell, the artist who painted the covers of most of our books, who died on December 10, 2000, at the age of 88. George, who was the stepfather of your Editor-in-Chief Winston Ramsey, was born at Dalston on October 12, 1902. His talent for drawing and painting was recognised at an early age and, though he had to start work at the age of 14, for many years he purposefully pursued his art education while earning a living through various jobs. During the war, he served as an auxiliary fireman based at Buckhurst Hill in Essex and he developed an uncanny ability to produce rapid caricatures of his fellow-firemen. After the war he at last obtained full-time work as an illustrator and graphic artist with the Walthamstow-based firm of Baird & Tatlock. Creative throughout his life, he was a founder member of the Chigwell Arts Society, active in the Theydon Art Group, and for many years gave very popular evening classes in portraiture and sculpture at Loughton Adult Education Centre. Following the death of his first wife Clementine, he married Peggy Ramsey in 1965. He exhibited extensively and his reputation as a portrait painter brought him many prestigious commissions. Working with Winston, George produced many paintings for *After the Battle*'s hard-back books, posters and postcards. His first book cover was the portrait of Pilot Officer Keith Gillman for *The Battle of Britain Then and Now* in 1980. The last cover completed before his death was the well-known image of the 3-inch mortar crew in the airborne perimeter at Oosterbeek for Volume 2 of *Operation 'Market-Garden' Then and Now*, published last September. George will be sadly missed.

George Campbell at work on the portrait of Pilot Officer Keith Gillman.

A death that came as a particular tragedy was that of Howard Bloch who died in October 2000, at the age of 45. For many years the Local History Librarian of Newham, East London, and a very active member of both the Greater London Industrial Archaeology Society and the Newham History Society, Howard was of invaluable help during the production of *The Blitz Then and Now*, *Epping Forest Then and Now* and *The East End Then and Now* (to which he contributed a chapter). Apart from being a source of reference and knowledge for thousands of people over many years, he compiled scores of historical books himself, including *Black Saturday*, which covered September 7, 1940, the first day of the Blitz. Made redundant from the library in 1995, Howard set up a local history consultancy named All Points East. Howard had been missing from his home for several weeks before the Thames River Police recovered his drowned body from the river near Canary Wharf on October 9, 2000. It took over a month before his remains were positively identified. A spokesman at his funeral said: 'Howard worked tirelessly to make the history of East London available to all. He was a lovely man who always had time for everyone.'



Howard Bloch (1955-2000).

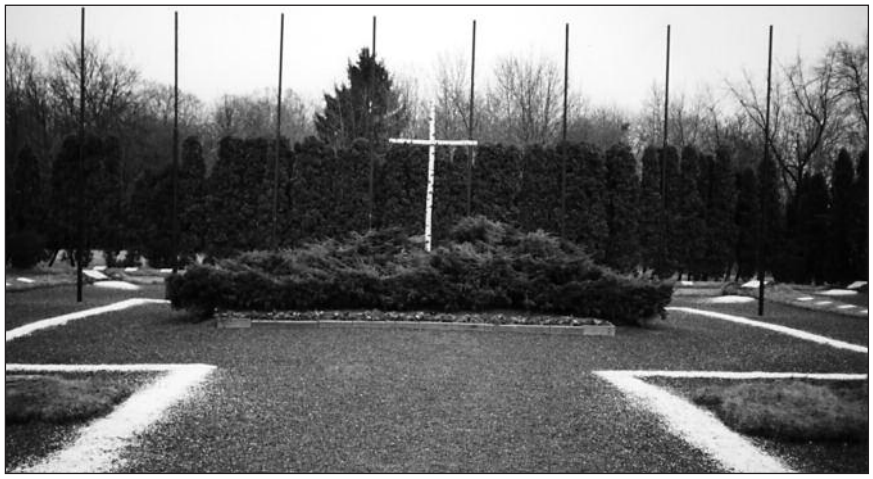
Joe Lyndhurst, whose collection of restored military vehicles featured in our very first issue, passed away after a short period in hospital on August 14, 2000. Born near Richmond, Surrey, in 1924, Joe's interest in military vehicles started in 1942 when he saw his first Jeep driven by a Canadian soldier. He bought his first Jeep in 1962 and by the time he founded the Warnham War Museum at Durford Hill, Horsham, in 1976, his collection had grown to well over 20 vehicles. One of the pioneer MV collectors, Joe was responsible for encouraging many to collect and restore military vehicles. One of the founding fathers of the MV community he will not be forgotten.

Having just done our story on the Cockleshell Heroes raid (issue 118), we were very sad to learn that Bill Sparks, the last surviving member of the legendary Royal Marine canoeists, died on November 30, 2002 — less than a fortnight before the 60th anniversary of the Bordeaux raid.

Several of our contributors have gone on to compile books on the particular subject they first wrote about in our magazine, and we are glad to report that several of them have managed to get their work in print.

James Hayward, author of our story on Shingle Street (issue 84), in 2001 published *The Bodies on the Beach. Sealion, Shingle Street and the Burning Sea Myth of 1940*, the first comprehensive account of the origin, circulation and astonishing longevity of the rumour of 'the German invasion that failed'. As late as 1992, conjecture about a German raiding force that was thwarted by a wall of fire provoked a national media scramble in Britain, with questions being asked in the House of Commons. Now James has set the record straight. In his review, Nigel West judged the book: 'Eloquent testimony to the willingness of some journalists to peddle completely bogus stories, and demonstrates how unnecessary secrecy can generate ridiculous history.' Available from CD41 Publishing, Dereham, Norfolk NR20 4TB. ISBN 0-9540549-0-3, Price £7.99 plus p&p.

Nice re-enactment staged for the cover of *Bodies on the Beach,* James Hayward's book on the Shingle Street affair.



Left: **One of the forgotten heroes reclaimed to memory through Manuel F. van Eyck's tireless efforts is Pfc Lawrence L. Ordway who died as a liberated POW on May 11, 1945, and was buried with a group of his Italian and French comrades-in-arms in Dablice Cemetery in Prague.** *Right*: **Ordway now has a proper gravestone inscribed with his name.**

Manuel F. van Eyck, who authored the story about the deaths of Captain Raymond Reuter and 1st Lieutenant William Preddy of the US 339th Fighter Group in Czechoslovakia (issue 75), at long last published *The Silent Heroes*, his carefully researched documentation of all the American airmen of the Eighth, Ninth and Fifteenth Air Force who went down over occupied Czechoslovakia in 1944-45. The 96-page book chronologically recounts hundreds of missions, listing all the aircraft (with type and serial number), crews, crash sites in Czechoslovakia, Germany and Hungary, temporary and permanent grave sites, the condition of POWs, escapes — all illustrated with well over 100 photos. Available from Turner Publishing Co, PO Box 3101, Paducah, KY 42002-3101, USA. Price $50 plus p&p.

In 2001 Noel Crusz published *The Cocos Islands Mutiny*, the subject of our story written by Wing Commander Derek Martin in issue 91 (see also issue 100, page 57). Mr Crusz has spent 30 years researching the tragic rebellion that occurred on the lonely atoll in the Indian Ocean on May 8, 1942. Finally completed with the assistance of a writers grant from the Literature Fund of the Australia Council, his 248-page book gives a fully documented account of the little-known drama that was kept secret for so many years. Available from Fremantle Arts Centre Press, PO Box 158, North Fremantle 6159, Australia. ISBN 1-86368-31-0, Price AUS $22.95 plus p&p.

We received a very interesting letter from John Richard Sumner of Great Eccleston in Lancashire regarding another mutiny, the one at Bamber Bridge (issue 22). Mr Sumner writes:

'Private William Crossland was shot outside my house at No. 332 Station Road, Bamber Bridge, on that evening. I was ten years old at the time. I had just gone to bed and it was still light outside, which helps to indicate the time of day.

'I heard three shots, and then heard an American voice call out: "I'm shot, I'm shot, I'm shot!" (improbably, three times). I leapt up to the window of my bedroom and could see Private Crossland below to my left lying on the pavement. (This is crucial as it indicates the location of the casualty.) Soon afterwards my father came upstairs and told me to get down as it was very dangerous outside. At dawn I heard movements in the road outside and saw a US Army truck into the back of which they placed Private Crossland and took him away. Later when I set off for school I saw the large patch of blood on the pavement outside our front-room window. To my knowledge the soldier had received no treatment during the night apart from the attention from my father which is mentioned below.

'When the shots rang out my mother looked out of the front door to see what had happened. She spoke to the soldier and he asked her to remove his boots, as he did not wish to die with them on. This she did, then my father went to the door and told her to go indoors. He later crept out and placed a pillow beneath the soldier's head to make him more comfortable, and American soldiers called to him to go back into the house as it was dangerous.

'During that evening, my father came across an American soldier in our backyard and promptly ordered him out. The following day my Aunt Renee, who lived next door, was setting off for work at a baker's shop and came across an army lorry in the back street behind our houses; a US officer advised her that it was dangerous and she should not proceed, but she insisted on going through. William (Bill) Croskell, a workmate of my father at the butcher's shop and farm, had been marooned all evening but at dusk he decided to go home through the fields to his home in Bridge Street. Unfortunately he was wearing a khaki-coloured smock (or "overall") which many agricultural workers wore and was shot at as he went but luckily he was not hit.

'Your map opposite page 1 is slightly incorrect for it shows the wrong position for Private Crossland who lay one block away, near the end of Duke Street. Examination of the photograph on page 9 (also incorrect) may help to clarify why the mistake was made. The photograph would place him outside the Co-op stores and not outside my house at No. 332. The Co-op was across the road from No. 331, which helps the confusion, as well as the fact that the actual position on the pavement outside our house is identical to that on the photograph, i.e. a few feet away from the end of a street. But the street-end in your photograph is Cooperative Street, not Duke Street.'

Flash-back to the Bamber Bridge mutiny. *Left*: **Thanks to John Sumner, we now know the precise spot where Private Crossland fell mortally wounded: here on the pavement outside his house at No. 332 Station Road, just south of Duke Street (the side street visible on the right).** *Right*: **Looking up Station Street. Crossland lay where the car is parked.**

Evidence of London Controlling Section's secret offices found by Colin Stirling in the basement of the Marriott Hotel.

Colin Stirling from London wrote to report on some painted signs he found while carrying out carpentry work at County Hall, the old Greater London Council headquarters, now the Marriott Hotel: 'While working in the lower basement, I came across these painted notices on one of the walls next to a doorway. I wonder if you have any information on these war rooms and what their functions were? I had a look behind the door, but alas it has been built up by brickwork — so is reduced to a mere dark cupboard. I think that on the other side of the wall is now the London Aquarium.'

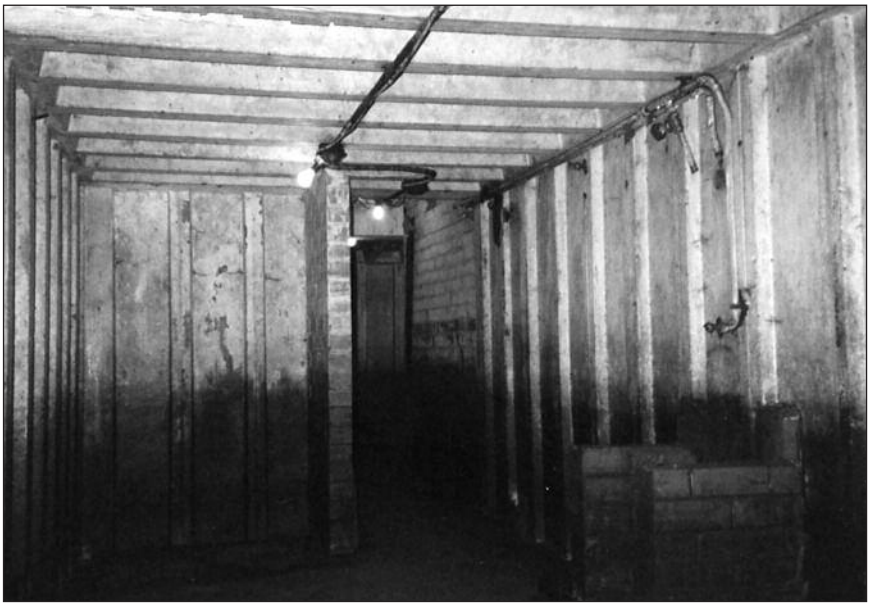
The London Controlling Section to which the signs refer, despite its innocuous name, was in fact a top-level military agency. Created by the British Chiefs of Staff in June 1942, it was responsible for the planning and coordination of all strategic deception operations during the war.

While some signs remain, others disappear. In issue 80 (page 24) we showed a picture sent in by Trevor Manning of Braintree, Essex, of a painted street sign surviving on a wall on the corner of Mount Street and Pilgrim Street in Liverpool. It pointed the way to an Emergency Water Supply reservoir further down the street near the Anglican Cathedral, where another 'EWS' sign survived. In April 1999, Mr Manning wrote:

'Recently my wife and I had cause to visit Liverpool again and, out of interest, we returned to the same area to see how these signs had fared over the intervening years. Imagine our horror when we saw the sight revealed in the enclosed photograph. This was taken on almost exactly the same spot as the one published in 1980! As you can see, the sign and wall have been completely obliterated by the construction of what is now a corner of the new Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts. If you compare the shapes of the uneven paving stones you can see how near this comparison is to the original. Further along the road, exactly the same has happened to the original 'EWS' sign, there now being a newly-built plain brick wall.

Street signs surviving in London. *Above*: **Spotted by Mark Brewer in Lord North Street, Westminster.** *Below*: **Pictured by Roger Newark on a slipway ramp on Albert Embankment.**

The inexorable progress of time: the corner of Mount Street and Pilgrim Street in the 1980s *(left)* **. . . and today** *(right)*.



Above left: **One of the entrance stairs leading down to the secret underground hospital discovered by chance under the RHP ball-bearing factory in Newark in May 2000.** *Above right*: **This is believed to have been a decontamination room.**

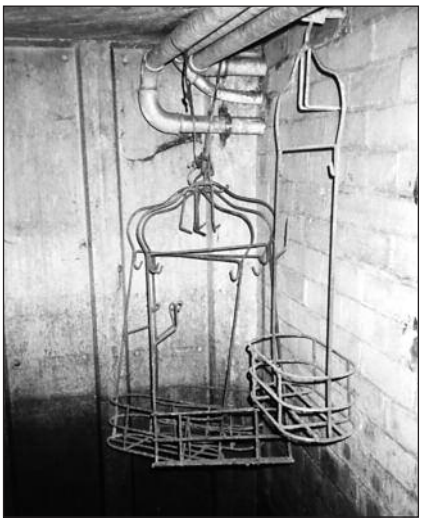
Daren Knight of Newark in Nottinghamshire wrote to us about a wartime underground hospital that was discovered in Newark in May 2000:

'The secret underground hospital was found under the RHP (Ransom Hoffman Pollard) ball-bearing factory which is still operating today and was bombed during the war. The discovery it seems was by chance when the company's own firemen went down a manhole on a training exercise. The hospital stands 15 feet under RHP's northern road car park and there are no visible outside signs of its existence. It measures 240 metres from end to end and is triangular shaped. According to the firm's plan, one side was for women and the other for men. Each had their own entrance and exit. Each of the 12 rooms has a gully running along the side of them to allow water to drain away because the hospital is below the level of the River Trent.

'Casualties suffering from a gas attack were taken through a special entrance. The first room was a rudimentary decontamination unit where they would strip off and stand in a bucket of bleach. They would then shower, put on clean clothes and enter the next room. If a person was found to be safe, he would be ushered out of a separate exit; if not, they would be taken to a treatment room.

'According to the plans, work was started on October 10, 1939, just two months after the war had begun. Apparently the hospital was used for treating the 100 or so casualties caused by a bombing raid on May 7, 1941, which claimed the lives of 36 people. At the time the factory was making bearings for the Spitfire's Merlin engine. The hospital also doubled as an air raid shelter.

'When discovered the hospital was under two feet of water but the fire brigade kindly pumped the water out for RHP/NSK's centenary celebrations in June 2000. The Imperial War Museum has asked for permission to survey the site for its own records. RHP/NSK have yet to decide what to do with the hospital. Their own firefighters have shown an interest in using it for training. I myself hope that it is restored and kept for future generations who would hopefully appreciate what a unique complex it is.'



Left in situ: numbered clothes baskets.

More relics: gas masks and helmets.

In issue 93 we covered the wartime explosions in the Royal Gunpowder Factory at Waltham Abbey (see also issue 107, page 13). On May 16, 2001, the Duke of Gloucester officially opened the establishment as a visitors attraction — its first opening to the general public in 300 years. The Napoleonic Association added a bit of colour to the event. Visitors can view an introductory exhibition, freely explore many of the restored historic buildings and some of the waterways and canals that served the site, and take special guided tours of the production sites of gun-cotton and nitro-glycerine.

A cover-up of a different sort: the Eder dam — one of the targets of the Ruhr Dams Raid — masked by a giant pink curtain. The 15,000-square-metre drape was hung up by German artist Gerhard Hesse from Welle (one of the villages flooded by the broken dam) to commemorate the 88th anniversary of the building of the dam. The curtain hung for 100 days until September 15, 2002.

On Saturday, June 9, 2001, British ITV television once again broadcast the classic war movie *The Dam Busters* (issue 10) — however this time for the first time in an edited version which completely expunged the name of Nigger, Wing Commander Guy Gibson's black labrador dog, from the film. Having just completed a year's work on Helmuth Euler's book *The Dams Raid*, your Editor-in-Chief, Winston Ramsey, was incensed by what he considered a totally ill-advised piece of political correctness and he immediately wrote to London Weekend Television (enclosing a copy of the book) to register the strongest possible complaint:

'Your company deleted the code-word denoting the success of the 1943 operation to breach the German Ruhr dams from the film of the raid — *The Dam Busters* — broadcast on Saturday. What a cruel insult to the 130-odd airmen who risked their lives on this mission from which 56 crewmen failed to return. I am quite sure that they — and the 50,000 men of RAF Bomber Command who were killed during the war — did not give their lives for a world in which historical fact would be perverted to satisfy the minority. That was precisely what they were fighting against!

' The word 'nigger' is not offensive in the context in which it was used in this operation: it was simply the name of the squadron's black labrador mascot (which also lost its life that day) which was chosen as the success signal, and you should have had the courage to stand up and explain this to the people alleged to have complained in the past. Did you not consider the offence you would be causing to the thousands of servicemen to whom the Dams Raid is a legend, and for which its commander was awarded the Victoria Cross, by such censorship? If you considered that the word might cause offence to some people, why did you not follow your own standard procedure and broadcast a warning before the film started?'

The managing director of LWT, Lindsay Charlton, replied as follows:

'Thank you for your letter and for sending me a copy of the authoritative and beautifully produced book.

'We have no intention of insulting the men of RAF Bomber Command or offending the thousands of servicemen to whom, as you say, the Dams Raid is a legend. The very act of our screening the film again, more than 45 years after its release, shows our belief that it remains legend to a much wider public, too.

'It is to that wide public that our overall broadcasting responsibility lies, a responsibility which I should point out is enforced by statute and licence. We are required, as licensed broadcasters, to uphold standards under Codes set by the Independent Television Commission and Broadcasting Standards Commission, and to reflect audience expectation particularly in the light of the time of day at which a particular production is transmitted. We routinely honour those obligations by frequent editing of feature films, particularly those screened before the watershed, to remove, for instance, offensive language.

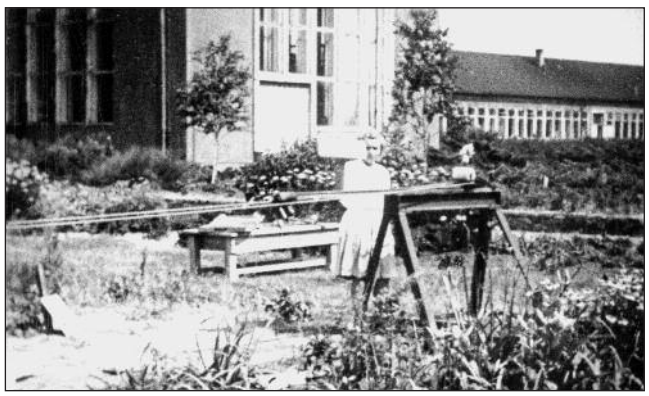
'I suspect that the difference between us lies in our views as to whether the word "nigger" can ever be inoffensive. We are today better informed on this specific point than we were in 1999 when we screened the film including the dog's name and received complaints about the use of the word. Research published last year (*Delete Expletives?* published by the BSC, the ITC, the BBC and the Advertising Standards Authority) indicated that the word "nigger" was regarded as the fifth most "severe" of swear words. More significantly, in charting shifts in public attitude, "nigger" had moved up to fifth position from 11th in 1998.

'The researchers noted: "*These words are also regarded by around 50 per cent to be unacceptable for broadcast at any time*." The ITC said it would "expect broadcasters . . . to take careful note of these findings."

'Notwithstanding the fact that the word was not used in *The Dam Busters* in a directly racist context, as one national newspaper put it last week it is and always has been a racist term. More importantly, attitudes towards its use have changed dramatically since World War II and since 1954 when the film was produced. That is compounded by the fact that we were screening the film pre-watershed at 2.45 in the afternoon, a time when we have to expect that large numbers of children and young people will be viewing. Broadcasting a warning of the type you indicate would not have been appropriate at that time and arguably would have been counter-productive in drawing the attention of the young to the word; many parents would argue they did not want their children introduced to it by a broadcaster, warned or unwarned.

'I hope you can see from the detail of this explanation that, far from our being "feebleminded", this issue was considered rigorously and objectively here. I can understand your annoyance at the decision, but I do believe it to be the right one.'

Although several of our contributors and readers informed us that they wrote letters to LWT expressing a similar view to ours, the chances are that the broadcaster will in future either stick to its censored version of the film or decide not to screen it at all any more to avoid another uproar. As one complainant said: 'In these days of rampant PC the broadcasters won't take any risks — not even with the unique context of *The Dam Busters*.' Another put it thus: 'If those brave men who gave their lives for free speech had known what would happen in this instance, they would probably have been justified in delivering their ordnance on South Bank Television Centre rather than the Ruhr dams.'

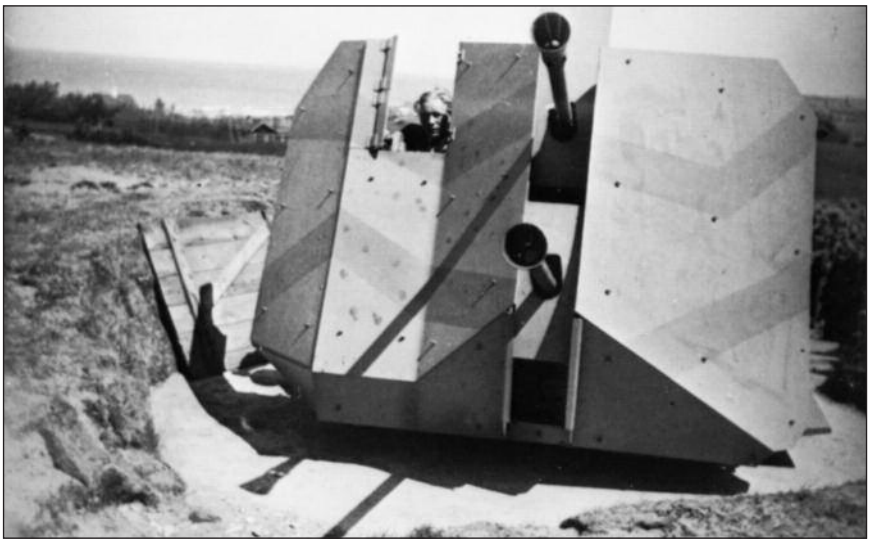


On page 201 of *The Dams Raid Through the Lens* we showed a picture of the Luftwaffe Ballistics Institute and Technical Academy at Berlin-Gatow where in September 1943 Dr-Ing Heinz Maecker carried out his back-garden testing of a miniature bouncing bomb (in the same primitive way as the bomb's inventor Barnes Wallis had done a few years earlier). In April 2000, our author Helmuth Euler found the comparison, now the cafeteria of the Gemeinschaftskrankenhaus (Community Hospital) Havelhöhe on Kladower Damm, across the road from the Gatow airfield. Unfortunately the pool where the tests were done has disappeared.

On June 25, 2000, a memorial was unveiled at Moldoen, the small island between Vaagso island and the Norwegian mainland, to commemorate four RAF aviators who died during an air attack by 24 Mustangs and 25 Beaufighters on Maloy harbour on April 22, 1945. Two Beaufighters were shot down, killing Flying Officer James Simpson (pilot) and Flight Lieutenant Cyril Knell (navigator) of No. 144 Squadron and Flying Officer Thomas Higgins (pilot) and Warrant Officer Alan Mirow (navigator) of No. 455 RAAF Squadron. The unveiling of the wing-shaped memorial — which stands opposite the stele commemorating the commando raid of 1941 — was performed by Lieutenant-Colonel Roald Skram, RNoAF.

Lieutenant-Colonel (Retd) Roald Skram of the Royal Norwegian Air Force wrote from Kjeller in Norway to correct us on some of the topographical names used in our article on the Vaagso Raid (issue 109). He points out that the town where the main landings took place is named Maloy, not South Vaagso, and that the name of the small island between Maloy town and the mainland, where the Germans had their battery, is not called Maloy but Moldoen. Colonel Skram writes: 'I believe that the planners of the raid must have had limited access to maps with the correct geographical nomenclature and names of the places to be attacked. It could also of course be that the Norwegian advisors had limited detailed knowledge of the Vaagsö and Maloy area. In addition, it cannot be excluded that their command of the English language was such that their guidance and explanations were misleading as far as local history and names were concerned.' As Colonel Skram explains: 'South Vaagsö was formerly, and at the time of the raid, the name of the municipality comprising half of Vaagsö island, part of the mainland and Husevaag island. The name of the town was and still is Maloy and not South Vaagsö as depicted in the article. Hollevik [where the commandos' Group 1 landed] was and is also part of South Vaagsö and Maloy Town. Today the municipality is just Vaagsö, as the two municipalities North and South Vaagsö were joined in 1964 with the town Maloy as its administrative centre.' According to Colonel Skram the proper name for the commando operation would therefore not be Vaagso Raid but Maloy Raid — under which name it is indeed known throughout Norway.

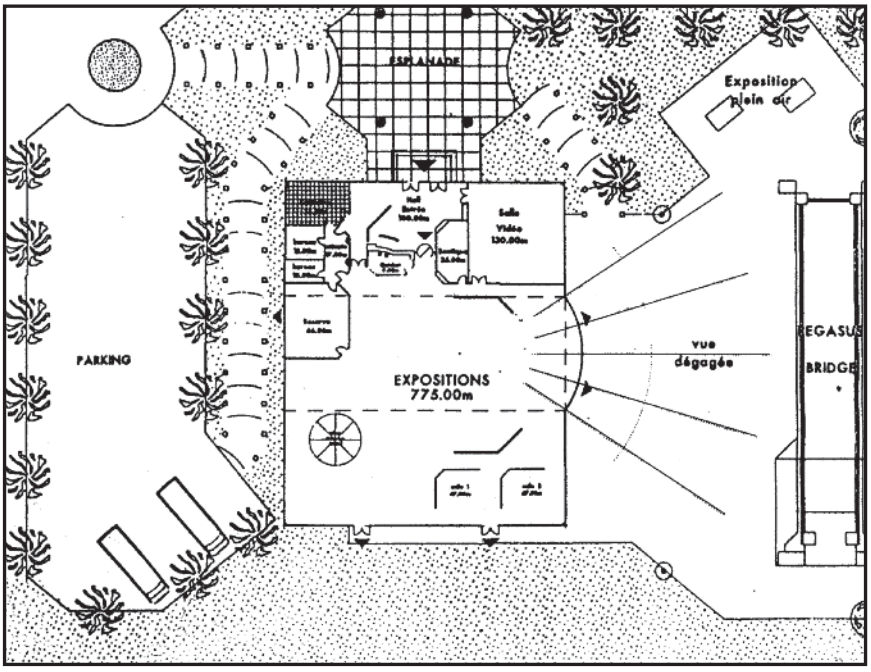
When preparing our story, we had already become aware that the Norwegians call the operation by the latter name but — as I explained to Colonel Skram in my reply — since the raid is known in most parts of the world only as the Vaagso Raid (especially in Britain and America where most of our readers come from), we had decided to stick with the popular title. I had tried to explain the difference in British and Norwegian topographical nomenclature in the caption at the top of page 5 but, admittedly, had not appreciated that the municipality of South Vaagso included more that just Maloy town.



Follow-up to the Shell House Raid (issue 113): Hendrik Wandel of Hundested in Denmark sent us a picture of the Flak battery which shot down one of the Mosquitos of No. 464 Squadron on its way back after the raid — either SZ999 flown by Flying Officers Dawson and Murray, or RS609 flown by Flying Officer Palmer and Sub-Lieutenant Becker. The battery was located at Spodsbjerg Fur (Spodsbjerg Lighthouse) in Hundested on the north coast of Sjaelland (the island on which Copenhagen lies) right on the corner of the Isse Fjord. The picture was taken on May 5, 1945, after the German surrender and one hour after the Germans had left the site.

Pegasus Bridge, finally preserved and on permanent display in the grounds of the new Pegasus Memorial Museum. The bridge was moved to its new site in February 2000. (T. S. Boden)

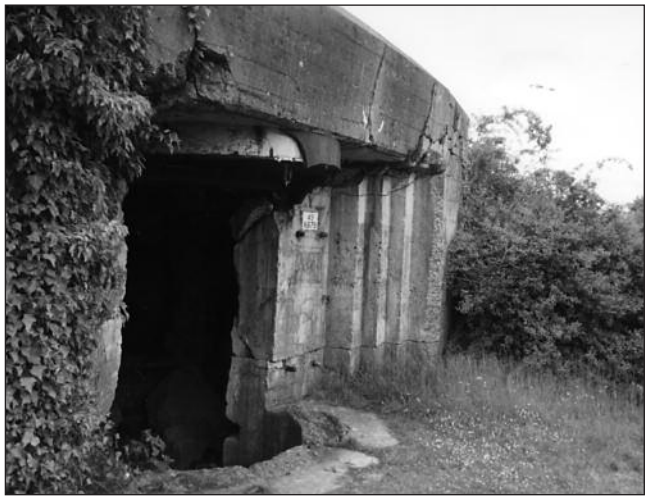
In Normandy, the new Pegasus Memorial Museum in Ranville was finally opened on June 4, 2000, the Prince of Wales performing the formal ceremony. The museum, which has the cross-section of a glider in its design, displays over 8,000 artifacts from the airborne battle, including Major John Howard's helmet and Bill Millins' famous bagpipes. Centrepiece of the museum is the original Pegasus Bridge, the crucial first objective of the Allied invasion. Removed from the Bénouville Canal in 1993 to make way for a replacement and having lain abandoned in a nearby lorry park since (see issue 107, page 6), it was moved to its new home on February 9, 2000. The new museum stands on the east bank of the canal within a few hundred yards of the bridge's original position, and visitors can view the bridge from the building.



The new museum encompasses a 450-square metre exhibition set up around a large relief map explaining the airborne battle. A large window allows visitors a grand view of the historic bridge outside.

Standard bearers of the Parachute Regiment at the official opening of the Pegasus Memorial on June 4, 2000.

Part of the opening festivities was a mass para-drop on the historic DZ. These pictures were sent in by Paul Shave — the son of Major J. R. S. Shave, MC, who was a section commander in the 3rd Parachute Squadron, RE, on D-Day.



Russell Jones from Liverpool sent us these pictures of the German coastal battery at Mont Canisy in Normandy, located near Benerville-sur-Mer about midway between the British beaches and Le Havre (see *D-Day Then and Now,* page 150). Built to house six 15,5cm guns — three in concrete bunkers and three in open hardstandings — and manned by Heeres-Küsten-Batterie 2./1255, the battery gave the Allied invasion fleet some trouble on D-Day. Though itself under fire from the battleship HMS *Ramillies,* it forced another battleship, HMS *Warspite* (which was firing at the Villerville battery further east along the coast), to lift anchor. The now-preserved battery can be reached by turning right as one enters Benerville, go up the hill past the church, turn left, and the battery is about 100 yards on the right up a steep path.

A Dutch reader, Hans Heltzel of Hoensbroek, wrote in about a curious inaccuracy in the movie *Saving Private Ryan* (issue 103) which hitherto no one seems to have spotted. He writes: 'It is a movie of high quality. The amount of care taken to achieve historical accuracy is unbelievable. Yet, when I watched the opening sequence, with the landing craft going for the shore, and the first beach obstacles came into view — the wooden ramps — I saw to my horror that the obstacles were all facing the wrong way round! The mined stake was pointing out to sea instead of sloping up towards the beach! Quite a surprise, this error by Spielberg. I quote from an official description of this type of obstacle: "Each ramp was a heavy timber, its seaward end buried in the sand, sloping up towards the shore, braced on stout vertical V-shaped posts, an inclined plane which would overturn and sink an incoming boat or let it slide up the ramp to explode the mine at the tip." I am amazed that nobody has noted the error before.'

Anti-invasion stakes pictured on the beach at Blankenberge, Belgium, by a German PK photographer in 1944 . . .

. . . and as erected for *Saving Private Ryan* on Curracloe beach in Ireland in 1997. Oops, something's wrong here!

Battlefield archaeology on the Western Front: relics recovered from Normandy by our regular contributors Colin and Ian Dewey from Yaxley near Peterborough. *Left*: **German helmet, mess tin, poncho, spare MG42 barrel and MG ammo box found south of Caen.** *Right*: **German MG42, Mauser rifle ammunition and US Garand rifle ammo found near Périers.**

The uncleared battlefields of the Eastern Front (issue 114) continue to attract relic hunters. Erik Rundkvist, a Swedish reader from Stockholm, sent us photos taken during an expedition to the Estonian island of Saaremaa. He writes: 'I am a passionate reader of *After the Battle*. I myself am travelling a lot to Estonia since the fall of communism. I am visiting most of the battlefield of 1944 together with Estonians and Russians. I hereby enclose some photos taken while I was digging with my Norwegian friend Rogelien on Saaremaa (Ösel in Swedish), Estonia's biggest island where the very last battle was fought in October 1944. It stood between the Russians and the Germans and Estonian legionnaires who could not be evacuated. The island is full of war material and tourists are asked not to walk in the woods because of all the explosives left there. We both read our testaments before digging and tried to keep a distance between each other when digging. I must say, it was quite exciting but we carried our findings like eggs!'

Battlefield archaeology on the Eastern Front: Erik Rundkvist *(above left)* **hauling off rusty ordnance from a forest on the Estonian island of Saaremaa.** *Above right:* **The fruits of one day's dig.** *Below*: **The uncleared battleground of Saaremaa abounds with unrecovered dead left after the fierce battles of autumn 1944 — which can lead to some pretty horrific finds.**

Joel Belsky of Philadelphia, who is involved in the US 104th Infantry Division Association, wrote to us about the Battle of Cologne (issue 104) and more particular about the tank-versus-tank battle near the cathedral depicted on pages 20-22. Mr Belsky draws our attention to the fact that among the war correspondents who witnessed that encounter was Andy Rooney of the US Army newspaper *Stars and Stripes* and that the incident is described in Rooney's 1995 autobiography *My War*, from which the following is taken:

'I was careful to stay well behind the lead tank in the column of tanks and wasn't much worried. It didn't seem likely that there were any snipers left in the buildings on either side of the street. It would have been suicide for any lone gunman to shoot at a tank commander standing up to his armpits out of the top turret of his Sherman or even at a couple of unarmed newsmen. I could see the spires of the cathedral over the tanks in front of me and the pace was so slow that I drove my Jeep up on the sidewalk and left it because it was less frustrating to walk. Under those circumstances, Jeeps did not get stolen or ticketed.

'Eventually the column resumed moving. As the lead tank reached the street in front of the cathedral, which ran parallel to the river, several blocks inland from it, there was the sickeningly unmistakable thud of a shell's impact on the lightly armoured side of a Sherman tank. The surprise shot came from a Tiger *[sic]* sitting no more than 100 yards west of the cathedral. Who knows how long it had been sitting there near the Rhine, waiting for that first American tank to show its nose as it pulled into the intersection.

'I ran for a doorway and, peering out, saw the top turret pop open. After a second, acrid smoke started belching from it in spasmodic puffs as though some mechanical monster was trying to blow smoke rings. Two crewmen pulled themselves out and fell to the street choking. A third man pulled himself up to his armpits and could get no further.

'The men on the ground climbed back up to the turret and, as I ran toward the tank, lifted and dragged the third man to the ground. It was the tank commander, a major, minus his left leg. There was nothing but a ragged pant leg, wet with blood where his leg had been. There were no medics near us. One of the soldiers who had pulled the major from the tank took off his shirt, and I held the major's leg just above where his knee had been while the soldier made a tourniquet out of the sleeve. The major stared at me as though he was blind, but he was alive. Alive for the last minutes of his life. I don't think the soldier had ever applied a tourniquet before but it wouldn't have mattered. Three of us lifted the major to a protected place by a doorway and put him down. He died. I had never been present before at the moment someone died. I didn't know whether to cry or throw up.

'There was frantic action in the tanks to the rear as one of the commanders organised a bazooka team to get down to the river from another direction and take out the Tiger waiting at right angles to our column. Within minutes we heard the sound of a bazooka hitting metal and a puff of dark smoke rose above the broken buildings down near the river. It was the direction from which the fire had come that had taken our lead tank — and the major's leg and life with it.'

Joel Belsky comments on the differences between our version and Rooney's: 'Rooney states that he helped carry the tanker (a major) with his leg blown off to a doorway, where he died. In your account he was carried to a bomb crater where he was attended to. I wonder if one of the soldiers in the picture in the upper left corner of page 21 is Andy Rooney.'

I cannot explain the differences in the two accounts (gunner or major; doorway or bomb crater; just wounded or died of wounds; also, was the German tank KOd by a Pershing tank or a bazooka?) but of course discrepancies in eyewitness accounts are a well-known phenomenon. Our version was based on a letter written to us by one of the other war reporters present, Fred Ramage of Associated Press, and on an original despatch by Mike Levin of Overseas News Service. If the wounded man was the tank's gunner, the rank of major is unlikely, but of course he may have been the tank commander. Levin names and quotes the assistant driver (Griffin) but does not the give the name of the man he identifies as the gunner. Certainly the picture reproduced on page 21 looks more like a bomb crater than a doorway. The man's wounds may have been dressed there, but of course he may still have died later on. Anyway, all this is a good example of how difficult it is to establish exact details of combat situations.

On September 9, 2000, a new memorial was dedicated at Hotton in the Belgian Ardennes to commemorate the part played by the 53rd (Welsh) Division in the Battle of the Bulge. The driving force in getting the project achieved was Harry Martin of the 53rd Division Veterans Association, seen here reading the inaugural speech.

On January 29, 2000, the people of Holtzwihr, France, dedicated a memorial to the men who fought and died with the US 3rd Infantry Division and Combat Command 4 of the French 5ème Division Blindée for the liberation of their community in 1945. Holtzwihr is the site of Audie Murphy's famous one-man stand on January 26, 1945 (issue 3), and it is therefore not surprising that the locals selected him as the soldier who best exemplified the courage and sacrifice of these soldiers. The memorial — dedicated on the 55th anniversary of the village's liberation — depicts the essential moment of Murphy's Medal of Honor action, a lone soldier standing on the deck of an M-10 and firing the tank destroyer's machine gun. It stands on the exact spot where the action occurred. (D. G. Hagenseker)

The US Postal Service honoured Murphy with a special stamp, part of a series of 'Distinguished Soldiers' stamps issued in 2000. Others in the series were Alvin C. York and John L. Hines of World War I fame, and Omar N. Bradley representing World War II.

Lieutenant L. Martin Jones of Company G, 423rd Infantry, US 106th Division.

Our story on the Hammelburg raid (issue 91) continues to generate very interesting letters. L. Martin Jones of Lawrence, Kansas, wrote to us in February 2001:

'I was pleased to read this thorough account of the raid because I was a prisoner of war at Hammelburg, Oflag XIII-B, on March 27, 1945, when tanks of Task Force Baum forced their way into the camp. The story is a fascinating one. I thank you for writing the account.

'There is however a minor mistake in your story. This makes little difference but in the interest of complete accuracy, I call it to your attention. On page 21, you state that the first of about 700 American officers captured in the Ardennes arrived at the camp on January 18, 1945. However, the date that this first group arrived was January 11, 1945, not January 18. I was a member of this group and I kept accurate records at the time, so I am confident that January 11 is the correct date.

'I was a platoon leader in Company G of the 423rd Infantry, 106th Division. Along with about 7,000 men of the 422nd and 423rd Regiments of that division, I was captured late in the day on December 19, 1944, when Colonel Charles Cavender of the 423rd issued an order to surrender. My notes provide the following record of my experience:

'December 20. Shortly before midnight, after walking from the point of capture near Schoenberg, Belgium, we arrived at Gerolstein, Germany.

'December 21. In the morning we were packed into railroad boxcars for the trip into Germany. Travelled along Moselle river valley.

'December 22. Continued trip beside Moselle river, crossing the Rhine river south of Koblenz.

'December 23. Train pulled into railroad yards at Diez, immediately west of Limburg-an-der-Lahn and stopped. About 1730 hours the railroad yards and a nearby POW camp were bombed by the RAF. Many POWs locked in railroad boxes and almost 100 in a building in the nearby POW camp were killed. German newspapers reported that 143 German civilians were killed and 162 homes destroyed.

'December 24. Remained in boxcars while railroad tracks were repaired.

'December 25. In the morning the train moved from Diez (Limburg) and continued journey.

'December 26. Continued railroad trip.

'December 27. Continued railroad trip through Frankfurt.

'December 28. Arrived at Stalag IX-B near Bad Orb, Germany.

'December 28 to January 10, 1945. In badly overcrowded POW camp near Bad Orb.

January 10. Herded into boxcars again and started trip to another POW camp.

'January 11. Arrived at Hammelburg railroad station and walked up a long hill south of town to Oflag XIII-B, the entrance to which was just over the crest of the hill.

'January 20. Lieutenant Varem was killed by a guard.

'March 9. About 500 officers arrived from a POW camp in Poland.

'March 21. Witnessed the killing of Lieutenant Charles L. Weeks, a friend of mine, by a camp guard.

'March 27. About 1630 hours we heard firing and observed the red streaks of tracer bullets in the areas between camp buildings. At about 1830 hours tanks of the Baum Task Force rammed through the barbed wire and entered camp. (I did not return to the camp, and I was not in the group that went to the Hammelburg railroad station. I was in a group of about 170 men who were recaptured after midnight of March 27/28.)

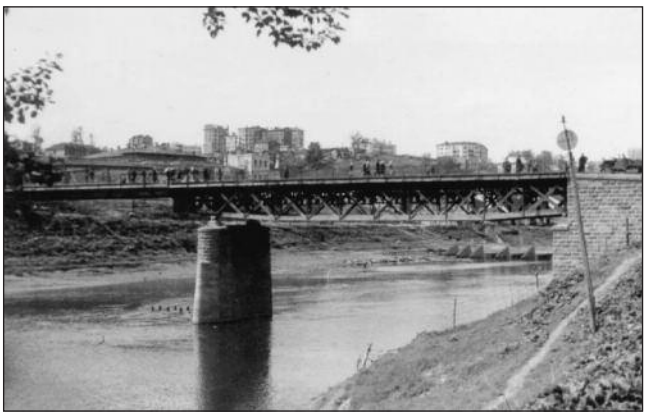
'March 28. Started walking under guards to south-east.

Mr Jones concluded his account: 'I have a rather complete record of villages through which we walked. Some highlights were as follows: On Easter Sunday, April 1, we witnessed strafing of nearby villages. On April 5 we were in a bombing raid on the south-west outskirts of Nuremberg. Some 40 men in our group were killed and others were injured, leaving about 110 to continue the march to Austria. On April 17 we crossed the Danube river at Weltenburg on a raft-like ferry. On April 22 we stayed overnight in a small church at Margarethenried. On May 2 we were liberated in Gars-am-Inn on the Inn river, making it impossible for our guards to get us across the river.'

Our Hammelburg issue also was the prime-mover in stimulating one of our German readers, Oberstleutnant Peter Domes of the German Bundeswehr, to start his own research into the raid. Peter was born and grew up in the Hammelburg area and so knows the area well. Since he began the project in 1999, Peter and his friends (among them Hauptfeldwebel Martin Heinlein, who first identified the Sherman on the Hammelburg range as an M4A3 105mm self-propelled howitzer — see issue 106, page 8) have done extremely well. They have contacted numerous former POWs of Oflag XIII-B and ex-members of TF Baum. Through interviews with local eyewitnesses, they have been able to more closely identify TF Baum's route through the various towns and villages on the road to Hammelburg. They have found several key documents relating to the raid — among them the after-action report of Oberst Richard Hoppe, the commander of the Hammelburg training area during the raid, which they acquired from his daughter; and the unit diary of the 10th Armored Infantry Battalion (which includes a very detailed breakdown of the task force's order of battle) — and compiled the casualty rosters of both sides. For example, the female Luftwaffe auxiliary killed by the Americans during their passage through Lohr (page 9) was Magdalena Verhoeven from 2./NJG4. The website begun by Peter (*www.taskforcebaum.de*) contains much of the new information and is a must for anyone interested in this episode.

Peter also provided us with some very interesting pictures, not related to Hammelburg, but to our stories on Smolensk (issue 91) and Katyn (issue 92). The pictures were taken by his father Karl Domes who during the war was an Obergefreiter with the Nachrichtentruppen (signals troops) in Eisenbahn-Nachrichten-Regiment 159 assigned to Heeresgruppe Mitte and during 1942-43 mostly employed around Smolensk.

Obergefreiter Karl Domes (left) on the Russian front in 1943. He is wearing gear to climb telephone posts for repair work.



Snapshots taken by Domes in the Smolensk area in 1943. *Left*: **Katyn railway station.** *Right*: **The Dnieper bridge at Smolensk.**

The entrance sign to Göring's art collection, *before* the error in 'Goering' was corrected. Compare with issue 9, page 34.

So how is it possible that the 'original' sign still has the spelling error today?

Jeffrey Wilson of Langport, Somerset, provided us with another interesting detail connected with the Katyn story. He writes:

'I was reading the Katyn issue when the photograph on the top left-hand side of page 22 caught my eye as I was sure I had seen it before. Several years ago I spent a holiday in Germany revisiting the places I had visited with my late mother and father (father having been a member of Task Force 135). In the town market a local author was autographing copies of a book he had written entitled *One Man's War*. His name was Frank Strooband. He lived in Germany at the beginning of the occupation but was subsequently deported to an internment camp at Laufen where he was camp senior. He was subsequently, together with another responsible civilian internee, "invited" to visit Katyn. In his book the same photograph appears captioned "Exhibits at Katyn. The author is the only civilian in this picture."'

Mike Morris of Texas Weapons Collectors Inc. at Bulverde, Texas, wrote to say that he has the original entrance sign to the exhibition of Hermann Göring's art treasures organised by the 101st Airborne Division at Unterstein near Berchtesgaden (see issue 9, page 34). However, when we had a look at the photographic evidence, we began to have serious doubts: although there exists an authentic picture of 101st men posing with a sign that looks like the one in Morris' possession (note the mis-spelling 'Georing' on both), the sign in the US Army picture in issue 9 clearly has the name spelled correctly. Either two identical signs were made (one with and one without the error) or, much more likely, there was only one sign and the error on it was corrected after the first picture was taken — but how could the spelling error then be there today? It definitely appears some forger dropped a clanger here! In any case, the sign now in Texas cannot be the one that hung at the 1945 exhibition entrance.

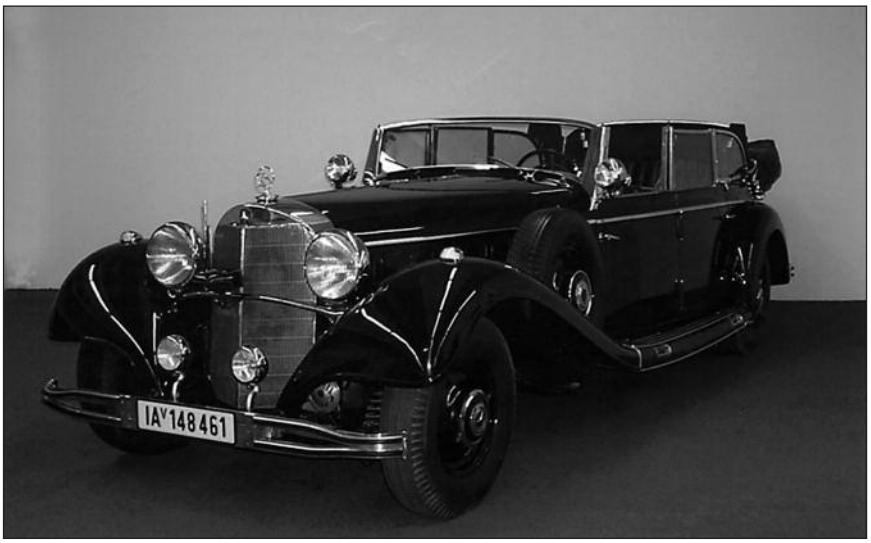
In issue 35, we published the results of Ludwig Kosche's detailed research into the Mercedes-Benz today displayed at the Canadian War Museum, which proved that it was not one of Göring's cars but in fact one of Hitler's. This disqualified an earlier feature on the same car which had appeared in issue 5, titled 'Göring's Mercedes-Benz' (this article itself replaced a story on the Oostend War Museum which had become defunct), so we revised that article and present editions of issue 5 have a story titled 'Hitler's Mercedes-Benz'. The confusion about the vehicle was partly caused by the fact that both Hitler and Göring had used a number of vehicles, and that it was very difficult for Allied soldiers who captured a Mercedes-Benz at the end of the war to be sure about its former owner. To illustrate this, we received a letter from Irving Cohen of Northridge, California, who captured another large car said to have been Göring's. Mr Cohen writes:

'I was a private in World War II and served my time with Battery B of the 216th AAA Gun Battalion. In May 1945 my battery took over four big houses in Garmisch-Partenkirchen. While I was walking back to the big house after chow, a German lady approached me and asked me in German and hand-motion to follow her. She led me to a wooden garage with two big doors and a slanted roof. She motioned me to open the doors. I was hesitant because a couple of months prior in St Tropez, southern France, Private Duncan had been killed while picking up a souvenir that had been booby-trapped. After this incident, our commanding officer gave orders: no looting or court-martial! I was undecided about opening the garage doors. I had my rifle and bayonet so curiosity got the best of me and I proceeded to open one door very slowly and not too far. I took my bayonet and slowly ran it up and down the door opening and, not finding any wires, I opened the doors one at a time and then noticed a car in the garage.

The lady told me it was Hermann Göring's. The car had two spare tires bolted on the back, one on the left front fender, one on the right front fender, and the cloth top was still up and bolted to the front windshield. Now I was never trained to use any mine detectors or any other instrument to detect booby-trapped equipment, so what do I do here? I was always a car buff and so-so mechanic in civilian life. Like with the garage door, curiosity got the best of me. I started to open the driver's door slowly and used my bayonet to try for hidden wires, etc. I finally opened the car door and pushed the leather-type seat to the floor. So far so good. I then got bold and sat on the seat! The dashboard had a factory-made switch for the ignition. I turned the key on and checked the gas, it had ¾ tank full! I then proceeded to step on the spring-type starter lever next to the brake pedal. It started very easy and thank God it was not booby-trapped. Well I put the shift lever in reverse and slowly backed the car out of the garage. I knew better not to drive on the open road because the MPs would grab me, so I kept the car, driving every day on the grassy fields until after four or five days it ran out of gas! No one in my battery knew I had the car and I never told anyone because of the risk of being court-martialled.'

One wonders what happened to the Mercedes after Private Cohen abandoned it and, even more so, if it survives today.

Terry Eckert of Las Vegas (see page 38) wrote to tell us that yet another of Hitler's Mercedes-Benz cars is on permanent display at the Imperial Palace Casino Auto Collection in his home town. The car in question is claimed to be the one with registration number IA^{V}148461, which is the one in which Hitler rode through Munich with Mussolini on June 18, 1940.



One of Hitler's Mercedes-Benz cars on display at the Imperial Palace Casino at Las Vegas. (Ludwig Kosche, the former Librarian of the Canadian War Museum, who authored our story on Hitler's cars in issue 35, passed away on May 17, 2000.)

Rosemary Rigby, holding a portrait of Violette Szabo, in the garden of her house.

THIS PLAQUE IS PLACED
AS AN EVERGREEN TRIBUTE TO
VIOLETTE SZABO, G.C.
BRITISH SECRET AGENT
BORN 26TH JUNE 1921
EXECUTED BY THE GESTAPO
AT RAVENSBRÜCK DURING 1945
IN DEEP APPRECIATION OF HER OUTSTANDING
COURAGE IN ENGLAND'S HOUR OF NEED.
VIOLETTE SPENT MANY HAPPY HOLIDAYS HERE
AT 'CARTREF' WITH HER AUNT AND UNCLE
MR. & MRS. H. LUCAS & FAMILY
R.I.P. VIOLETTE
"Carve her name with pride"
ROSEMARY E. RIGBY 1968
St. WEONARDS BRANCH
ROYAL BRITISH LEGION

The plaques on Mrs Rigby's house.

On June 24, 2000, a small museum in honour of SOE secret agent Violette Szabo (issue 86) was opened in the stable block of 'Cartref', a country house at Wormelow near Hereford, Herefordshire. The four-bedroom stone villa was once owned by Violette's uncle, Mr H. Lucas, and she spent many happy holidays there in the 1930s and during the war sometimes came to stay with the family to recuperate between missions. The museum is the brainchild of Rosemary Rigby, MBE, who has lived in the house since 1965 and has collected photographs, letters and other memorabilia relating to the heroine and in 1988 had already unveiled a memorial plaque to Violette on the outside wall of the house. In October 1998, Mrs Rigby launched an appeal which was actively supported by Virginia McKenna, the actress who played Violette in the film *Carve Here Name With Pride*. The appeal raised £17,000, including a £5,000 grant from the National Lottery, which was used to convert the stable block to a museum. Virginia McKenna, who performed the opening ceremony in the presence of several SOE veterans, said: 'I think the idea of a museum devoted to her is marvellous. My generation and maybe the next will remember her, but Violette was a wonderful role model and I hope this will sustain her memory among generations to come.' For details of admission and opening times, ring Mrs Rigby at 01981 540477.

Three weeks before the opening of the museum at Wormelow, another commemoration of Violette Szabo took place across the Channel, in France. On June 6, 2000, a memorial to her was inaugurated near the village of Sussac, close to the spot where she had been dropped by parachute in the night of June 6/7, 1944, exactly 56 years ago to the day. The monument was unveiled by Tania Szabo, Violette's daughter, in the presence of the mayors of Sussac and of Limoges, Jaques Valéry and Alain Rodet, and many veterans of the Resistance.

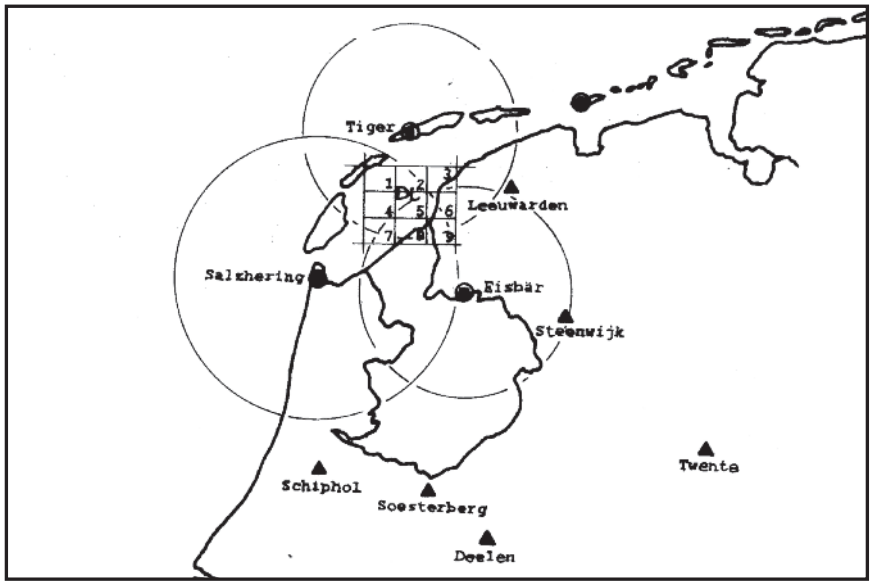
Unveiling of the memorial to Violette Szabo near Sussac, France, on June 6, 2000. Tania Szabo, the heroine`s daughter, stands second from left. The picture was taken by Monique Lafarge and supplied to us by Roger Avignon (who took the pictures at Sussac that appeared in issue 86).

Turning to another SOE story, the shooting down of Hudson FK790 over the IJsselmeer in the Netherlands with three secret agents aboard (issue 106), we received two letters from Dutch readers that throw more light on the matter. First Dennis Peschier of Nijmegen wrote with details from the German side:

'It was a rather quiet night over the north of Holland. Since hardly any Allied aircraft used the air space over that part of the Netherlands, the primary German radar station, code-named 'Salzhering'(west of Den Helder), could easily pick up the hostile intruder on radar and follow it for 60 kilometres before it came down. The secondary stations, 'Tiger' and 'Eisbär', could also follow part of the route. I do believe that FK790 was downed by the night fighter you refer to. The pilot, Feldwebel Lahmann, had taken off from either Twente or Leeuwarden (III./NJG1 used both at the time) and was probably orbiting in the area. Lahmann was not a night-fighter ace — this claim is the only one I could find until now. Perhaps this is why he misidentified a rather uncommon Hudson for a four-engined bomber. The bullet hole in the Hudson's propeller suggests that the bullet came from behind, which excludes the possibility of flak. The difference in crash time is not unusual. Lahmann gave the attack height as 80 metres, so he had other priorities than looking at his watch. One thing is odd: Lahmann reported the location as '05 Ost *N*/DL-8. It should however have been 05 Ost *S*/DL-8, as the first location is off the southern coast of Norway, not an area in which III./NJG1 could be expected.'

Then Huub van Sabben of the Dutch Air War Study Group passed on details of an interview he had conducted in April 2001 with an ex-Luftwaffe air gunner who requested to remain anonymous, which adds more details and — quite a surprise — even suggests that the Germans had prior knowledge of the arrival of the secret agents:

'In July 1944, I was Unteroffizier in the 7. Staffel of the III. Gruppe of Nachtjagd-Geschwader 1 based at Leeuwarden in the Netherlands. During the night of July 5/6, 1944, our crew were on alert at the Leeuwarden air base. This means ready and waiting in the aircraft to be scrambled into the air. It was shortly before 0100 hours when we were scrambled to intercept a 'Tommy' which was nearing Terschelling island on a north to south course. I have been told it was a Lancaster and to this day I believe it was a Lancaster.



How the German radar stations in north-west Holland intercepted Hudson FK790 in sector DL-8, enabling a night fighter from III./NJG1 to shoot it down. (D. Peschier)

They usually came in low over the North Sea gaining height when approaching the Dutch coast.

'After getting airborne, our wireless/radar operator contacted our ground radar station (possibly 'Tiger' at Terschelling) to obtain bearings which would lead us to the bomber. We were ordered to proceed to map reference EM8, which on the German map is a square near Terschelling bank and Terschelling island. After we had received our instructions concerning height, distance and direction, we finally made visual contact with the British bomber which was flying towards us. As we were coming from Leeuwarden and were flying towards Terschelling, we were on a south to north course. It was an almost perfect night, excellent visibility and plenty of moonlight.

'As was standard procedure, we were in constant radio contact with our radar station and we reported making contact. Calling 'Pauke, Pauke, Pauke' (I am attacking), we attacked the British bomber which was still not flying at great height and was approaching our aircraft fast. We decided to fly under it and, as we did, we opened fire with our two upward-firing cannons, the so-called 'schräge Musik' (Jazz music). Our aim was good and we hit the enemy well who immediately started to burn and crashed into the IJsselmeer. After we had opened fire, we banked away to port in order to avoid a collision with the enemy aircraft or being hit by debris.

'When we had landed at Leeuwarden, we were instructed after the debriefing to report to our Gruppen-Kommandeur. Almost the entire staff was present. The first question was fired at us: "Who do you think you shot down last night?" We feared for a moment that we had downed one of our own aircraft, as had recently occurred. The heat was off when they explained that it was a Tommy alright, but . . . we were not supposed to have shot it down as we did. We should have followed the aircraft until the agents were dropped. Do you know about the secret agents? As we were expecting this aircraft the agents would have been arrested at the DZ and only then should we have been allowed to open fire. This instruction never reached us, nobody had told us. Later that morning the Division staff at Deelen sent their congratulations for the swift and efficient way we had dealt with this interception.

'Some days later, we were informed that several agents had washed up on the shore. As far as I can remember two of them carried German IDs, maps and money on them.'

The Volkswagen automobile works (issue 12) is one of a number of big German concerns which in recent years have undertaken to face facts and come to terms with their wartime past. Following the example of other companies like Daimler-Benz and the Deutsche Bank, VW in 1985 commissioned professor Hans Mommsen to research and write an objective, independent history of Volkswagen during the Third Reich. The result, a massive single volume of over 1,000 pages, was published in 1996.

More recently, Volkswagen decided to compensate former foreign slave workers for the suffering endured by them at the Volkswagen works during the war years. Most of VW's forced labourers came from countries in Eastern Europe, particularly Poland and the Ukraine, but there were sizable contingents from Holland and other Western European countries too. Rather than invest all compensation money in development projects in Eastern Europe, as was initially planned, VW decided to also pay individual ex-workers, setting aside a budget of DM 20 million for the whole programme. After charging consultancy firms in each country to trace as many surviving ex-forced workers as possible, the concern, paid every one of them an equal sum of DM 10,000. (In November 1998, Volkswagen came under renewed attack after it emerged that 350 to 400 Russian and Polish babies, taken from female forced-labourers, died of hunger and neglect at a children's home at Ruhen near Wolfsburg during the war years.)

Coupled with their compensation programme, Volkswagen set up a permanent exhibition documenting its wartime history. Ex-forced labourers were asked to supply material for it. The exhibition which is housed in one of the air raid shelters surviving on the grounds of the Wolfsburg factory opened in December 1999. As it happened, a prime exhibit for such a museum was discovered practically on its doorstep in August 1998. The foundation stone of the Wolfsburg works, officially laid by Hitler in 1938, disappeared in the 1950s when VW built a new main administrative office on the factory grounds. A company chief construction engineer took the massive swastika-engraved stone block away, using it as a bird bath in his garden for a number of years. Later he returned it, secretly burying it somewhere in the factory grounds. It was only re-discovered by chance when workers dug up the pavement in front of the head office to repair a broken water main.

In 1999, several big German firms which employed large numbers of foreign slave workers during the war — like BMW, Daimler-Benz, Hoechst, Bosch, Siemens and, again, Volkswagen — jointly set up a compensation fund, named 'Erinnerung, Verantwortung und Zukunft' (Remembrance, Responsibility and Future), and began negotiations with lawyers representing organisations of ex-forced labourers, their main negotiating partner being the Conference on Jewish Material Claims against Germany. A final agreement was not reached until May 2001.

The foundation stone of the Volkswagen plant at Wolfsburg — laid by Hitler in 1938 — see issue 12, page 1. It vanished for over 40 years only to be unearthed in 1998. Now it is displayed in the factory's museum. (Volkswagen AG)

Diana Payne (centre), our ex-codebreaker Wren, at the press showing of the movie *Enigma* with *After the Battle*'s Winston Ramsey and Barbara Rush.

Dennis Yates, jailed for fencing an Enigma machine stolen from Bletchley.

In 1982 (issue 37) we published the story of Diana Payne, one of the 2,000 Wrens employed at the 'Ultra' code-breaking establishments centred on Bletchley Park — this then being the first account to be published on the girls' side of the operation. On August 28, 2001, your Editor-in-Chief had the pleasure of taking Diana to a special showing of the movie *Enigma* on Wardour Street, London. Produced by Mick Jagger (who appears fleetingly in the film with his daughter) and Lorne Michaels and directed by Michael Apted, the movie tells the story of the codebreakers whose work helped the Allies to win the war. Although the film is essentially a romantic thriller (starring Dougray Scott and Kate Winslett) based on the fictional plot of a bestselling novel by Richard Harris (which in a surprisingly clever way ties in the breaking of the Kriegsmarine U-Boat codes with the German discovery of the Katyn massacre), the production designers did a very fine job recreating the wartime appearance of and atmosphere at Station X.

The production was unable to use Bletchley Park itself as a location, because of the many modern buildings which today surround it and because of the dilapidated state of the surviving huts, so they chose to use nearby Chicheley Hall, to the north of London, instead. Production designer John Beard and his team built temporary huts around it and reconstructed six replica 'bombe' machines used in the decoding of ciphers. (These were donated to the Bletchley Park museum after the end of production.) Diana said the film was very accurate and portrays the work and the equipment very well. As she wrote to us afterwards: '*Enigma* turned out to be much better than expected. Already my ex-Wren friends are delighted to know that they are shown working the bombes. My only criticism was the very loud sound!'

While the film was under production, Enigma was in the news for an altogether different reason — when one of the three Enigma encoding machines held by the Bletchley Park museum was stolen from its glass cabinet during an open day on April 1, 2000, shortly before the display was to be fitted with infra-red alarms. The stolen machine, valued at £100,000, was an extremely rare variant used by the Abwehr, German military intelligence. (Amazingly, on the Tuesday after the theft, we at *After the Battle* received a phone call from a man who ordered a copy of our issue 37. In the course of the conversation the man said: 'I have got an Enigma from Bletchley Park . . . Ooh, I shouldn't have said that!' Of course, we informed the police.) Nothing was heard of the matter until five months later, when the Bletchley Park Trust received a ransom letter offering to hand back the machine in return for a quarter of its worth and a promise of immunity from prosecution. The letter, typed in broken English and authenticated by a photocopy of the registration tag G312 on the side of the machine, purported to be from a middleman acting on behalf of the 'current owner'. In a series of letters the go-between repeated his demands. When the police declined to make the promise of immunity, in the last week of September 2000 a letter arrived threatening the destruction of the machine. The Trust and the police reacted with a public appeal not to wipe out an item of such historic importance; a week later, the Trust declared itself willing to pay the £25,000. On October 7, Bletchley Park museum director Christine Large even spoke to the man on the phone, but it all led to nothing. Then, on October 17, BBC journalist Jeremy Paxman returned from holiday to find a hefty package at his office which had arrived there ten days earlier. The parcel turned out to contain the stolen machine, albeit without its three main rotors, for which the middleman still claimed the full ransom.

The story came to a finale when, on November 8, Thames Valley Police arrested the middleman who turned out to be Dennis Yates, a 57-year-old former antiques dealer specialising in WW2 memorabilia from Sandiacre in Derbyshire. At preliminary hearings before magistrates at Aylesbury Crown Court on November 20, Yates persisted that he had only been an innocent go-between working on behalf of a client who had bought the device in good faith. This man, so Yates claimed, was resident in India and in high office. At the subsequent trial which began on September 26 the following year, Yates pleaded guilty to fencing. A separate charge of blackmail was ordered to lie on file. On October 19, 2001, he was sentenced to ten months imprisonment. The question whether his mysterious original client really existed and, if so, who he was, remains unanswered.

Unusual aviation memorial at Meerhoek, Belgium: the original tailplane of Wellington HE164 of No. 466 RAAF Squadron which crashed at Meerhoek on the night of February 14/15, 1943. The bomber was shot down by a German night fighter while on its way to attack Cologne. Three of the six crew died. After the crash, locals hid the tailplane under hay at a nearby farm, setting it up as a memorial on the crash site after liberation. (D. Hindryckx)

And in Britain ever more airfields are enriched with memorials commemorating their wartime role. One of the latest additions was unveiled at the entrance to former West Malling airfield in Kent on June 9, 2002 and incorporates this striking bronze statue by sculptress Kate Denton of a running airman. West Malling was an RAF airfield from 1939 to 1967, over 25 different squadrons spending operational time there during the war (see *Battle of Britain Then and Now*).

Isabel Naylor de Mendes, who looked after the grave of The Man Who Never Was for 40 years.

The story of The Man Who Never Was (issues 54, 58, 64 and 94) gained a nice tailpiece in March 2002 when the woman who has devoted 40 years to tending the grave of 'Major William Martin' was made an MBE. Isabel Naylor de Mendes, 69, was given the medal by the British ambassador to Spain, Peter Torry, in a ceremony at Huelva, the city where she lives and where 'Major Martin' lies buried in the Cemetario de la Solidad. Mrs Naylor de Mendes said she saw it as her duty to take flowers to the grave of 'William Martin', the man whose real name remained a mystery until Roger Morgan discovered in 1996 that he was in fact Welshman Glyndwr Michael — as our readers were the first to learn in issue 94.

An amazing sequel to our story on the Rüsselsheim Death March story (issue 57) occurred in August 2001 when the municipality of that German town invited one of the survivors of the atrocity of August 26, 1944, back to the town to receive a formal apology from its citizens. Sidney E. 'Gene' Brown, former tail-gunner of Liberator 42-110107 *Wham! Bam! Thank you, Ma'm* and one of the three survivors of the murderous beating meted out to the captured aircrew by a frenzied mob, was the central guest at a ceremony on August 24 attended by over 100 people. The decision to offer an apology to Brown (the only other survivor alive today, Forrest Brininstool, was too frail to make the trip) and officially commemorate the six US airmen who died was not a unanimous one, some critics arguing that Rüsselsheimers today bear no guilt for the killings. However, as Mayor Stefan Gieltowski said at the ceremony, the majority of the townsfolk was of the opinion that the incident must not be forgotten. Brown, 76, from Gainsville, Florida, said he had long since forgiven the people of Rüsselsheim. 'I have told everybody — I have no animosity in my heart against the people of Germany or the people of Rüsselsheim.'

We contacted Sidney Brown to learn more and in his reply he described a happy sequel to the visit: 'If you remember the pilot's wife was pregnant when we went down. A daughter was born and because of the publicity for the trip she called me. In turn her mother contacted me. We will be in contact now on a regular basis.'

Another act of reconciliation between former enemies has been the meeting of veterans of both sides from the 1940-43 desert war. Retired Captain Douglas Drake, MM, of the Royal Gloucestershire Hussars Yeomanry Association sent us a report of a reunion of Eighth Army veterans with former members of the German Afrikakorps which took place on October 15-17, 1999. The three-day event which mostly took place at the Rommel Barracks at Dornstadt in southern Germany, was attended by some 1,200 Afrikakorps veterans; a strong Italian representation of veterans from the Ariete, Trieste and Bersaglieri Divisions; about 150 British former 'Desert Rats' (including four Chelsea Pensioners, all ex-Royal Tank Regiment), and old soldiers from Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and India. The final reunion of the Afrikakorps to be held, the event culminated in a moving act of remembrance and forgiveness at Rommel's grave in Herrlingen cemetery (see issue 80). As Mr Drake commented: 'This was a unique occasion which was worthy of far better coverage by the media. The act of forgiveness and remembrance was a powerful message which should have received greater publicity throughout the warring factions of this troubled world.'

Sidney Brown, survivor of the Rüsselsheim Death March, after receiving formal apologies from the town municipality.

The final reunion of the Afrikakorps at the Rommel-Kazerne in Dornstadt, Germany, attended by a strong delegation of Allied veterans.

Left: **Douglas Drake, MM (right), who served in the desert with the Royal Gloucestershire Hussars, gets a feel of Rommel's field marshall's uniform displayed in the barracks' museum.**

On the left is the museum curator, Thomas Merbt. *Right*: **Chelsea Pensioners Tom Parnell, Norman Williams, Jim Caswell and George Bailey at the ceremony in Herrlingen cemetery.**